

Defiant Again: Indigenous Peoples and Latin American Security

Donna Lee Van Cott

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*A popular Government,
without popular information or the means of
acquiring it,
is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or
perhaps both.
Knowledge will forever govern ignorance;
And a people who mean to be their own
Governors,
must arm themselves with the power which
knowledge gives.*

JAMES MADISON to W. T. BARRY
August 4, 1822

DEFIANT AGAIN: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LATIN AMERICAN SECURITY

Donna Lee Van Cott

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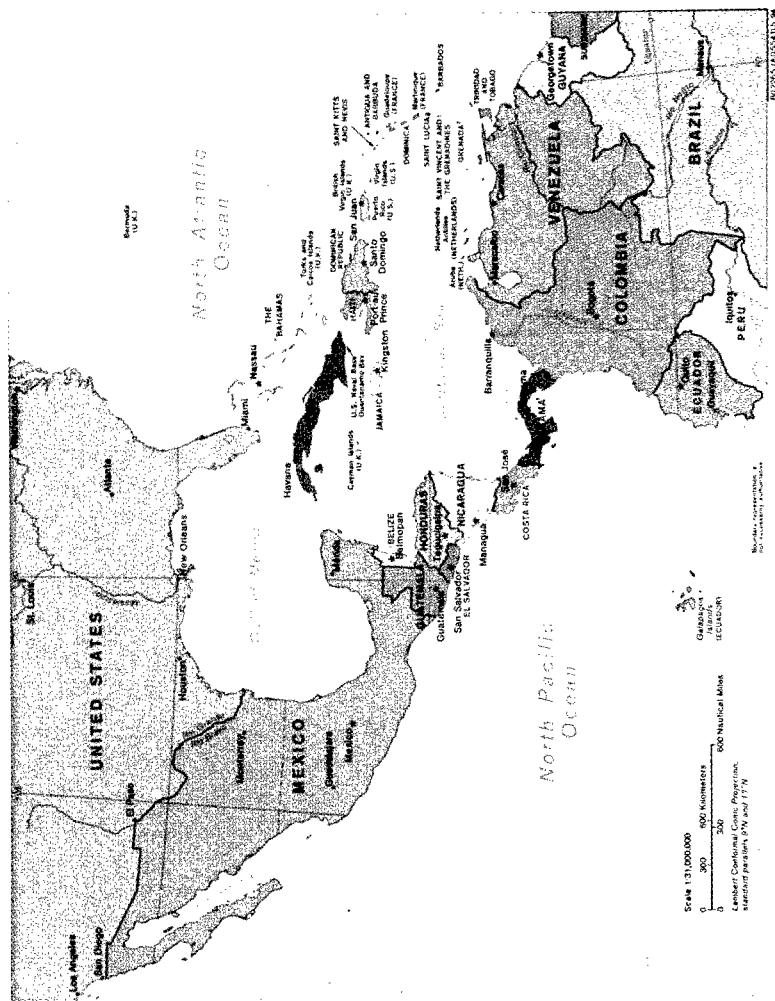
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DEFIANT AGAIN: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LATIN AMERICAN SECURITY

OVERVIEW

Since the Conquest, indigenous communities throughout Latin America have endured with astonishing restraint a multitude of impositions and indignities.¹ Occasionally that restraint has been punctuated by cycles of rebellion and repression. Violent confrontations between Indian organizations and the state in the last two years indicate a growing frustration by indigenous peoples with political attempts to advance their demands. Major altercations have occurred in Mexico, Ecuador, and Bolivia, with smaller scale confrontations becoming a regular occurrence as Indian communities grow increasingly defiant of state authority in the wake of repeated violations of indigenous territorial and human rights. While in some countries such groups have been able to achieve recognition and protection through constitutional and legal reforms, Indians in general continue to be disproportionately the poorest of the poor and regular victims of human rights abuses. They are chronically under represented in political office in all countries of the Americas.

This paper explores the complex nexus of security issues that the governments of Latin America and the indigenous communities of the region face at the end of the 20th century. A better understanding of security issues from the perspective of indigenous communities should enable policymakers in the United States to estimate more accurately how U.S. policy plays a role in the aggravation or resolution of interethnic conflict in Latin America. Although the national contexts of indigenous-state relations differ markedly throughout the hemisphere, relevant issues of national

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security are strikingly similar—maintenance of international borders, eradication and interdiction of drugs, suppression of armed insurgencies, and containment of rural unrest. National governments, state armed forces, and indigenous peoples, however, all have different conceptions of the meaning of “national security.”

Governments tend to view security in terms of sovereignty: protecting the integrity of international boundaries, containing social conflict manifested in rural violence or urban riots, monopolizing the means of legitimate force, protecting natural resources, and encouraging economic development. The Latin American military tends to view security as a mission to defend the nation from either external attack or internal subversion. Thus the relationship between the military and indigenous peoples varies, depending on the definition of the military’s security mission, which may include wiping out internal subversion, maintaining public safety, or promoting economic development.

Indigenous peoples, however, consider themselves to be nations, and their conception of national security is intimately connected to their survival *as nations*. Thus, in addition to physical security—protection from violence and coercion—indigenous peoples struggle to protect their cultural security, their medium for preserving the Indian nation as a political, territorial, and societal entity. The most important security issue is not only retaining lands they have controlled for generations, but also the right to control that land communally. Land is not merely an economic resource to indigenous peoples (although for the majority of Indians who eke out a living through subsistence farming, it is vital to survival), land is also the material guarantee of indigenous self-government and autonomy. It provides the basis for the re-creation of the indigenous community as a social organization—the medium through which native peoples pass their culture and their identity to their descendants.

Direct threats to land tenure or incursions by outsiders have always been met by a show of force, and many times have led to violent confrontations during which Indians usually suffer the highest casualties. On the rare occasions when Indians have formed armed organizations, they have almost always done so to defend themselves against violent attempts to expel them from ancestral lands, or to protest government attempts to dissolve Indian land rights protected by law.

To understand the land issue, therefore, it is necessary to look at it from the perspective of indigenous peoples, who increasingly project themselves on the international stage as nations or nationalities, claiming for their peoples the right to self-determination and autonomy under international law. Past notions of indigenous communities as tools of elite manipulation, objects of state policy, or barriers to national integration and economic development are challenged today by the evident autonomy and sophistication of Indian movements. An understanding of Indian aspirations, values, and traditions is necessary to understanding how ethnicity and political change could interact in the next decade and the extent to which interethnic conflict might be manifested in violent confrontation.

It is also important to distinguish among the various political tendencies within Indian movements. For example, the peasant-based tradition of the diverse Indian communities and organizations of Mexico (rooted in that country's transformative social revolution), is different from the pan-Mayanism of Guatemala's Indian intelligentsia, which derives its energy from the revitalization of Mayan languages. It is equally important to understand how differences in ideology have divided Indian communities in most countries of the hemisphere. Another factor affecting the issue is the exact definition of "indigenous movements." Such movements continually change their form as their membership fluctuates (class-centered or ethno-centric), their political goals change (symbolic "awareness" or specific legislation), or their tactics vary (union-based activities or broad social alliances).

Indigenous peoples remain exceedingly diverse. The protection of Indian territory, language, culture, and autonomy is a "security issue" common to all indigenous peoples in the Americas, derived from centuries of extreme marginalization. Additional problems, however, have developed in the last decades as a result of security policies that do not fully address the complex relations at the local level between indigenous peoples, the military, guerrillas, drug traffickers, and economic elites. The essays that follow address three major issues:

- The contradictions between contemporary Latin American national security goals and policies and the consequences of these policies for civil-military relations.

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- The emergence of indigenous movements in Brazil and Colombia, where Indian activists and their supporters have been able to achieve impressive constitutional reforms despite their minuscule demographic representation.
- An indigenous-state conflict that has received wide attention but remains little understood—the armed uprising in Mexico in January 1994 by a group calling itself the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

Three significant conclusions can be drawn from these essays:

- First, with regard to the traditional “security issues” (protection of borders, control and dismantlement of guerrilla forces, and the fight against drug trafficking), governments whose police and military forces work with indigenous organizations and communities to solve these problems are *less* likely to be responsible for human rights violations against indigenous peoples. They are also *more* likely to resolve the problems at hand. For instance, the Peruvian military did not begin to make headway against the Shining Path until it realized that Peruvian *campesinos* were just as eager to root out the guerrillas. Once they joined forces, they made progress.
- Second, as the studies of Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil demonstrate, the rise in Indian political mobilization in the 1970s can be traced to increasing pressure on Indian lands during that period. In Colombia and Brazil, this rise can be traced to efforts to eliminate legal regimes protecting communal land and other special ethnic rights. Indians are also likely to mobilize around issues that complement activity on the national or international agenda—constitutional reform, protecting the environment—and to seek support from international organizations that share their concerns.
- Third, the most important focal point for change is the resolution of indigenous land tenure rights. Most, if not all outbreaks of hostility have resulted from incursions on Indian lands, the basis of their economic and cultural stability and survival. Working to resolve this problem will encourage economic stability for indigenous groups, resulting in political stability and national security.

What will the future hold for indigenous politics? In the 1980s and early 1990s, environmental issues were the focus of international attention. Indians in Latin America made their most

convincing public appeals as protectors of the environment. As we move into the 21st century, Indians are likely to increase their already strong presence in the international effort to codify and protect the rights of national and ethnic minorities through international law and innovative national experiments in power sharing and regional autonomy. International instruments protecting the rights of indigenous peoples are under consideration by both the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

The power of the indigenous movements to force government concessions and command the attention of political actors and the media may have crested, as the quincentenary and the Rio environmental summit fade from public attention. The weight of demographics, however, should keep Indian movements on the political and security agenda in Latin America, as the relative growth of the population identifying itself as *indígena* steadily outpaces that of the remainder of the population. The influence and presence of sophisticated and experienced Indian leaders and their advocates in international organizations should continue to play an important role in the shaping of international development, trade, and environmental policy. The solution for each indigenous group will be different, as the best strategy for each depends on the history of interethnic relations in each country (and within regions of each country), as well as the feasibility of a cooperative versus confrontational approach.

NOTES

1. The terms "Indian," "Amerindian," and "indigenous people(s)" are used interchangeably when referring to those people and communities defined by the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities definition as follows:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having ahistorical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

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Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations,
United Nations Document E/Cn.4/Sub.2/1986/7Add.4, para.379 (1968).

1. 500 YEARS OF CONFRONTATION: Indigenous Peoples and Security Policy in Latin America*

The cycle of Indian rebellion and government repression that characterized the first centuries of contact between European and Amerindian peoples can not yet be consigned to the history books. The eruption of an armed movement in southern Mexico, comprised primarily of destitute Maya Indians, as well as smaller demonstrations of resistance in Brazil, Ecuador, and elsewhere speaks eloquently to this fact. While the majority of conflicts between the estimated 40 million indigenous peoples in Latin America and the societies in which they live are now played out in the political arena, security issues continue to generate violent inter-ethnic conflict.¹ Since the Conquest, the interests of indigenous communities usually have conflicted with national governments' security policies. These include a dimension explicitly intended to control the autonomous tendencies of indigenous communities, suppress Indian political organizing, and erase the independent identity of Indian nations.

Relations between Latin America's indigenous population and the state have always been militarized. The European conquistadors subdued native peoples with superior weapons and maintained control through force over the often rebellious indigenous populations of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies from administrative centers established in the viceroalties and

*An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the National Defense University, North-South Center, University of Miami, conference on Security in the Post-Summit Americas, March 31, 1995, Washington, DC.

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audiencias. After independence, the new states remained centralized, with the majority of the government apparatus located in the capital city and some important provincial commercial centers. By this time, the majority of the indigenous population had fled or been forced into the more remote areas of the country: the unexplored jungles, the highest mountain ranges, and along the blurry borders between the emerging nations. The borderlands were particularly desirable destinations, as they represented the furthest distance between the centralized power of adjacent states and thus the weakest zone of state power. Until very recently, these remote regions of indigenous population were controlled almost exclusively by two institutions: the Catholic Church, which in many countries received a mandate to care for the Indians' bodies and souls; and the military, charged with maintaining the tranquility of the indigenous population, projecting the power of the state, and patrolling contested borders. Areas of commercial agricultural value were ruled by the large landholding classes, backed up by the military when necessary.

By the mid-20th century, little had changed in the indigenous regions of Latin America. From the highlands of Peru and Guatemala to Brazil, where the state remained a distant idea, the military represented state power to indigenous people. In the Amazon Basin, military presence increased, especially along the borders, under the national security regimes of the 1960s and 1970s, when military governments of the Amazonian countries—particularly Brazil—sent troops to defend and patrol their borders. Each encouraged the settlement of colonists in the vicinity to legitimize territorial claims.

BORDER CONFLICTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

Prior to January 26, 1995, it would have been difficult to convince even experts on the region of the seriousness of border conflicts in Latin America. *Machismo*, hyper-nationalism, paranoia, and even illicit business opportunities are frequent excuses used to explain policies that mass troops along borders to defend against seemingly imaginary threats. When war broke out between Ecuador and Peru on that date, the unthinkable possibility of a shooting war between Latin American states became a reality, especially to the tens of

thousands of Amerindians in villages along both sides of the border, who bore the brunt of months of military attacks. As soon as the first shots were fired, national Indian leaders from both countries appealed to the combatant governments and the international community to cease the fighting, which had resulted in the bombing of several Shuar communities and the evacuation of upwards of 8,000 Shuar from the area. Meanwhile, local leaders of that ethnic group fought each other from either side of the border.² Both armies used Indian scouts to navigate the forbidding terrain of the theatre of conflict; the BBC reported that the Peruvian army used Indians as minesweepers to penetrate outposts (in Indian territory) mined by the Ecuadoreans. In mid-February, indigenous and environmental organizations called for the designation of a bi-national protected territory in the affected area and for donations of food and medicine for indigenous refugees.³

The casualties suffered by indigenous border communities in Peru and Ecuador would be repeated if hostilities were to break out on other sensitive borders. Disputes remain unresolved between Guyana and Venezuela, which both claim 50,000 square miles of rainforest, and on Venezuela's western flank, where a dispute with Colombia over the use of the Gulf of Venezuela and the Los Monjes islands flares up occasionally. Venezuelan troops also patrol the Arauca area, to prevent drugs and guerrillas from infiltrating their border with Colombia—particularly since February 26, 1995, when 120 to 150 Colombian guerrillas killed eight Venezuelan soldiers and wounded three others during a cross-border raid to steal weapons.⁴ As a result, both the Colombian and Venezuelan militaries have increased their presence on the border. The aggressive defense along the frontier has led to violence against Indians mistaken for guerrillas and complaints by Indians of harassment during trips to visit relatives across the border. While unlikely to lead to armed action in the near future, Bolivia's claim to a Pacific outlet in the region of Antofagasta remains hot politically, particularly in Bolivia.

The Ecuadorean military's occupation of the disputed region following the 1942 settlement of the border conflict with Peru led in the early 1970s to the discovery of oil by the military in the Amazon. Control of this resource—a key source of foreign exchange for the heavily indebted country—fell into the hands of the armed forces. Today, retired Ecuadorian officers own large

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landholdings in the Amazon and have benefitted from the oil production and colonization boom promoted by the government in the 1980s. Thus, in Ecuador the exploitation of natural resources for national development—and for the enrichment of the military as an institution—has been an important reason for the militarization of areas populated by indigenous peoples, now considered rich in natural (particularly mineral) resources.

Brazil has long maintained a strong military presence in the Amazon to protect its borders and control the exploitation of mineral and timber resources. The first Brazilian government agency in charge of indigenous affairs was created in 1906 under the direction of the military, and it retained charge of indigenous policy until the creation of the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI) by the military dictatorship in 1967.⁵ Since the end of military rule in 1985, the government has promoted colonization and development of the Amazon in order to relieve economic and social pressures in the south and depressed northeast, to exploit the region's vast resources, and to patrol its northern frontiers. The military has been on the defensive regarding control of the Amazon and its resources. The international community—particularly environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—began a campaign in the late 1980s to protect the Amazon rainforest from uncontrolled logging and burning of large tracts of land for environmentally unsustainable cattle ranching and commercial agriculture. The NGOs also mobilized to protect indigenous peoples and their territories from the illegal predations of *garimpeiros* (goldminers) and other fortune hunters who have invaded indigenous lands virtually with impunity.⁶

The military is also concerned about the Indians because they inhabit the border regions. Indian reserves cover 10 percent of Brazilian territory, although only half have been officially demarcated. Two of the largest groups, the Yanomami and the Macuxi, are along the borders of Venezuela and Guyana, respectively.⁷ The military is increasingly concerned that Indians will join with their ethnically related neighbors to pressure for an independent Indian state and has begun to lobby the central government regarding the entire Indian land situation. In February 1994, President Franco gave the National Defense Council authority to approve any further demarcations of Indian lands. In December of that year, the Brazilian Senate passed a bill requiring the National

Defense Council to review all demarcations of Indian land in the frontier zone, as well as prior consultation with state governments prior to forwarding future demarcations to the federal congress for approval. According to the Indianist Missionary Council, such a procedure would make further demarcation of Indians lands unfeasible anywhere in Brazil.⁸

The massacre of 16 Yanomami in August of 1993 by Brazilian *garimpeiros* on the Venezuelan side of the border drew the attention of the international community to the consequences of the Brazilian government's failure to regulate economic activities in the Amazon or to prevent incursions by *garimpeiros* into Yanomami reserves.⁹ None of the miners accused in the 1993 massacre is in custody. According to the U.S. State Department's 1994 human rights report for Brazil, about 2,500 *garimpeiros* reentered the Yanomami reserve in Roraima in 1994, setting off an epidemic of malaria and other diseases that killed at least 26 Yanomami.¹⁰

In January 1995, the Pro-Indian Commission of Sao Paulo (CPI-SP) and the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) reported that 400 Macuxi Indians were expelled by the Roraima state military police and army from their own territory, where they were protesting the unlawful construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Cotingo River. In the process, the armed forces destroyed the Macuxis' livestock holding area and three houses; seven Macuxi were beaten and two were seriously injured. According to NGOs in the area, violence against the Macuxi in the Raposa/Serra do Sol Indian area where they live has become commonplace; the U.S. State Department reports that four Macuxi were murdered in 1994. The state of Roraima has proceeded with construction of the dam despite the lack of congressional approval and the consent of the indigenous communities, as mandated by the 1988 Constitution. The Rainforest Action Network reports,

Military police and members of the Army continue to occupy the area. The Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) has asked FUNAI to remove the police from the area, and to request clarification from the Army about its participation in this illegal operation, and for the Federal Ministry to take all necessary measures.¹¹

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On February 9, 1995, Brazilian Minister of Justice Nelson Jobim announced an army deployment to support the demarcation of Indian lands on the border with Guyana and Venezuela. Conflicts between the local Krikati Indians and nonindigenous peoples in the state of Maranhao had led to the assassination of Krikati leader Manuel Mendes on January 17, 1995.¹² However, because of strong pressure from the military, the Justice Minister also announced his intentions to submit the land claim of the Macuxi in Roraima state to the National Defense Council. That decision was prompted by the Brazilian Senate in December of 1994, when it passed a bill to review all indigenous land demarcations in the frontier zone of the Amazon. The bill was sponsored by a senator from Roraima, and promoted by the armed forces. According to the Indianist Missionary Council (CIMI),

standing to gain from the bill are the economic groups who have a vested interest in exploiting the natural resources to be found in the Indian areas, and certain sectors of the military dissatisfied with the way in which the demarcation is currently carried out, and who maintain, erroneously, that Indian lands in the frontier zone present a threat to national sovereignty. There is an article in this Bill which would require approval of the National Defense Council for any future initiatives for the demarcation of Indian lands in the frontier zone. This Council is made up of the four military ministers (the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and is intended to be a consultative agency for the President of the Republic on issues relating to national sovereignty.¹³

Meanwhile, on Brazil's Bolivian border, CIMI reports that the Brazilian Army, which had occupied and registered ownership of Insua Island, is resisting the federally ordered demarcation of the island as an Indian Area. The local commander has refused to allow the Guato Indians, who were expelled from the island by cattle ranchers in 1925, to resettle their land. According to the Indians' supporters, the army's claim of national security is a cover for the main reason land demarcation of Indian areas has been stalled: pressure from powerful political and economic interests in border states who covet the natural resources on those lands.¹⁴

COUNTERINSURGENCY POLICY

The relationship between indigenous peoples and armed insurgents, drug traffickers, and security forces is a complex one. As noted above, indigenous peoples inhabit the more remote regions, especially those straddling international borders. Guerrilla groups and drug traffickers inhabit these regions for the same reasons: they are excellent places to evade the short reach of the state, to base offensive operations, and from which to retreat across international borders. As a result, where guerrilla movements, drug traffickers, and indigenous peoples share territory—most notably in Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru—Indians must struggle to establish a working relationship between themselves and the various armed groups in the region.¹⁵ In order to address the challenge of subversive armed movements, governments—particularly military governments—in the hemisphere have targeted groups in society considered inherently subversive or susceptible to the influence of communist groups. Indian community and political organizations are among those targeted.

Since the 1960s, Indians in Colombia have fought for independence from the FARC, M-19, ELN, and other guerrillas based in rural areas, fending off attempts by the insurgents to infiltrate their political organizations and coerce their support.¹⁶ At the same time, they suffer from attacks by the Colombian security forces, who assume the Indians support the guerrillas:

The contradictions increased during the 1980s, a period of “total war” against the various guerrilla organizations. These organizations, in turn, aware of the government repression of the Indians, made repeated entreaties to involve them in their armed struggle, while the Indians searched harder for ways to protect themselves from both fronts without abandoning their own struggle for revindication. There were various nonaggression accords between *cabildos* (indigenous towns) and guerrilla organizations but, as the “total war” came to be a “dirty war,” the Indians remained between both fronts—as usually happens—suffering deaths and repression, as much from the FARC and M-19 as from the army, police, and the “*pájaros*” or assassins in the pay of the landowners.¹⁷

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Similarly, Peruvian Indians are caught between the brutal Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) guerrillas and the scorched-earth tactics of the Peruvian military. In the period 1983-1986, thousands of Peruvian *campesinos* (peasant farmers) were killed by Peruvian troops gunning for Shining Path members and sympathizers. *Campesinos* in the highland areas controlled by the Shining Path were slaughtered by both sides in the guerrilla war, each side assuming that the largely neutral *campesinos* supported the other. By the late 1980s, the Peruvian military had changed its strategy to one of working with *campesino* communities—often organized into self-defense *rondas*—to fight the Shining Path. This strategy ultimately succeeded, with far less violent consequences for the indigenous population.

On the run from the beefed-up intelligence and targeted counterinsurgency tactics of the Peruvian military in the highlands, the Shining Path remains a potent force in the Amazon. Thousands of Asháninka, who number in the tens of thousands, have been forced to join the guerrillas or pressed into service to provide an economic base for the Shining Path, often through production of coca leaf. While the Asháninka have resisted the guerrillas, they have less access to resources such as weapons with which to defend themselves than do highland Indians. As a result, the U.S. Department of State estimates that:

between 20-40 Asháninka communities have disappeared as a result of Sendero violence, and that more than 10,000 have been displaced. As many as 3,000 Asháninkas may be trapped in zones under Sendero oppression. In late August [1994], unconfirmed reports indicated that common graves with the bodies of Asháninka natives were discovered; the authorities said they believed the graves may contain the remains of victims of Sendero violence.¹⁸

The Shining Path also took advantage of land conflicts between indigenous colonists from the highlands and local Indian communities to lure Indians into their ranks: some 60 Asháninka Indians were killed by a Shining Path unit containing Indian conscripts on August 18, 1993.¹⁹ According to Eusebio Castro, an Asháninka and vice president of AIDESEP, one of Peru's two Amazon Indian confederations, the presence and violence of the Shining Path have diminished somewhat in the more settled areas

of the jungle, where the Peruvian military and police now maintain a foothold. In rural areas, particularly where there are no good roads, Indian communities must defend themselves. While the Asháninka successfully expelled from their territory the now nearly defunct Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in the early 1990s, ejecting the Shining Path is proving more difficult.²⁰

In 1987 the balance began to shift from the majority of violence against Indians being perpetrated by the military toward a greater role for the Shining Path, which currently accounts for the majority of abuses against Indians. According to Peruvian sociologist María Isabel Remy, domination and intimidation were part of the Shining Path's strategy. Indigenous communities increasingly allied themselves with the army in order to defend themselves. In the beginning, however, the Peruvian Government mistook the Shining Path for a social movement with broad appeal among the marginalized indigenous population:

The action of a Maoist party organized with strict discipline and solid dogma was not analyzed; rather, the phenomenon was perceived as a sort of popular uprising against poverty, marginalization, and injustice. Moreover, in the early 1980s it was seen as an indigenous movement, a sort of "caste war." Depending on the anthropological current, it was identified as "millenarian" or "indigenous"; it was the "revenge of the centuries," "the Andean utopia," the *pachakut'i*. This ultimately mistaken view of the violence—urban, distant, and culturalist—also had a military interpretation that drove a strategy of brutal repression of the population by the army. An *indio* (and if from Ayacucho, all the worse) was identified as a real or potential member of the Shining Path. In this context the army attacked and occupied peasant population centers. Fear and distrust of the "other" led any soldier seeing a *puna* Indian wearing a poncho to suspect that weapons might be hidden under the poncho, and would fire first and find out later. The army was an army of occupation.²¹

Indeed, the Shining Path had some initial support in rural areas where conditions of government neglect favored the introduction of some authoritative power. The Shining Path had little to offer but violence, however, and community support plummeted.

The Guatemalan military has always considered the country's majority Mayan population to be a base of support for the country's decades-old guerrilla forces, organized under the umbrella of the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Unity (URNG). Since 1962, the military-controlled government's attitude toward the country's majority Mayan population has increasingly reflected national security concerns that this population harbored a potential and actual threat of communism. That preoccupation with communism emanating from the rural population dates back to concerns about Bolshevism in the 1920s, as well as fears of a contagion from the 1932 rural rebellion in El Salvador, which contained a large Indian component.²² Anthropologist Richard Adams identifies a crucial shift in relations of the Guatemalan military with the Maya population following the expansion of the insurgency in the 1970s, when the military actively began attacking Indian targets, "eradicating at least 410 Mayan communities, killing an estimated 50,000 people and propelling at least two to five hundred thousand refugees into Mexico and the United States."²³

The URNG is a class-based leftist movement founded by *ladinos*. It is not an "Indian" movement, and its political agenda is not based on the cultural and ethnic demands made by the country's many Mayan political and social associations. Still, the unprovoked repression by the military of the indigenous population led thousands of Maya to join the URNG to defend their communities, to avoid forced recruitment into the Army's Civil Self-Defense Patrols or to topple a government that had long-repressed and despised the Maya. The distinction between the URNG and the Mayan political movement, however, remains clear: Mayan organizations insist on representing their own interests in the on-again, off-again peace negotiations between the government and the insurgents. Mayan groups such as the Council of Maya Organizations of Guatemala (COMG) were particularly angered to learn that one of the topics of discussions between the URNG and the government—from which the Mayan organizations had been excluded—was to be "identity and rights of the indigenous peoples."²⁴ As a Maya-Caqchiquel writer recently put it, the "dialogue for peace" is seen as a "monologue" between two [*ladino*] minorities who basically maintain the colonial discourse."²⁵

Indigenous rights and identity issues have delayed resolution of the 34-year-old insurgency. In February of 1995, following four rounds of talks between the URNG and the Guatemalan government on the indigenous issues, key obstacles remained, including measures that would lead to the ratification of the International Labor Organization's Convention 169²⁶ on the rights of indigenous peoples, which would require reform of the Guatemalan Constitution. Convention 169 recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to regional linguistic autonomy and self-government. Also in the balance were demands for recognition of the existence of Mayan communities in Guatemala and their systems of justice, ideas that are anathema to the country's elites. The country remains one of the few in the hemisphere whose constitution fails to define its indigenous population or to grant it any special protections.²⁷

The guerrillas in Guatemala may be using the indigenous issue to maintain the support of the militant Maya groups. They can thus demand the type of profound social reform that the government would not accept, perpetuating the armed struggle until the "correlation of forces improves," while maintaining a posture of willingness to negotiate.²⁸ According to the Central American Report,²⁹ indigenous rights issues are of strategic importance to the URNG in terms of its immediate political future and credibility among civil society groups. The guerrillas had been criticized sharply by Maya organizations when they signed a human rights agreement with the government that failed to include investigation and punishment for past human rights violations. The Coordinator of Mayan People of Guatemala (COPMAGUA), a group composed of four federations representing about 300 Maya organizations, has made it clear that it will not endorse a peace agreement that does not make radical reforms in the law and politics of what they call the "racist, ethnocentrist, exclusive, homogenising, centralist, classist and militarist" nature of the Guatemalan state. The COPMAGUA has called for reforms similar to those recently made in Colombia and Bolivia, recognizing the pluricultural and multilingual nature of the Guatemalan state.³⁰

In Mexico City, on March 31, 1995, the government of Guatemala and the URNG signed the Accord on the Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, an historic agreement that will require the Guatemalan Congress to ratify the controversial provisions discussed above, among others. While the government

finally capitulated to demands for constitutional reform in order to lay to rest this phase of the peace process, the largest party in congress, the conservative Guatemalan Republican Front (RFG), led by former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, threatened to block passage of any agreement that requires constitutional changes and has thus far blocked ratification of ILO 169. As do their counterparts in Ecuador, Guatemala's military and political Right consider indigenous autonomy commensurate to the creation of "states within a state" and, as such, a direct threat to the existence of the "nation-state."³¹ It now appears that the Guatemalan Government and the guerillas have finally completed the peace accords, and a new congress appears likely to approve them.

While the majority of guerrilla insurgencies in Latin America are class-based, nonindigenous movements, there are several instances of Indian-led guerrilla movements and others where the leadership and ethnic orientation of the movement are murky. The most clear-cut case of an Indian armed movement is the Quintín Lame, formed in 1981 by Indians in the Cauca region of southwestern Colombia to defend indigenous communities from attacks by guerrillas, drug traffickers, local landowners, and state security forces. During the years of its existence it had only 100 to 300 members. While the Colombian government considered the group to be no different than the country's other insurgencies, the Quintín Lame was a local self-defense movement with no national political or military aspirations. On May 31, 1991, one month after a Quintín Lame representative, Alfonso Peña Chepe took his oath as a member of the National Constitutional Assembly, the group put down its weapons and became a legal political organization.³² Attacks against Colombian Indian leaders continue, however. Seven community leaders of the Zenu tribe were murdered in 1994, as was Indian rights activist Laureano Inampue. Attacks from the Colombian guerrillas continue to be a problem. A spate of attacks against indigenous communities in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region occurred in September of 1994, in which FARC guerrillas executed four Indians suspected of collaborating with the army.³³

In Bolivia, several tiny armed movements have emerged from the more militant factions of the Katarista movement, a self-consciously ethnic strain of the Indian political movement of the late 1980s. These include the Red Offensive of the Katarist Ayllus,

the FAL-Willka, and the larger Tupaj Katari Guerrilla Army (EGTK). Two groups—Zárate Wilka and the Nestor Paz Zamora National Liberation Army—were all but dismantled by the Bolivian army following their assassinations of U.S. missionaries and a prominent businessman. Heightened anxiety in Bolivia about armed insurgencies cropping up in that country, in light of the possible inspiration and rumored infiltration of the neighboring Shining Path, led the Bolivian security forces to root out and dismantle these weak groups. According to anthropologist Xavier Albó, these Marxist-Leninist, mostly urban-based movements use Indian names and slogans and the indigenous banner to attract support from the countryside.³⁴

In Ecuador, the guerrilla group known by the Quichua name Puka Inti (Red Sun, or Sol Roja, in Spanish), rumored to be influenced or supported by the Shining Path, has been vigorously suppressed by the military. While the military has claimed that Puka Inti is tied to the indigenous movement, its base is in the student movement in Guayaquil. Some former indigenous members of the now-defunct Ecuadorian subversive group Alfaro Vive, Carajo (Alfaro Lives, Damn it), are currently working peaceably within the nonviolent Indian political organizations.

Finally, the degree to which the Mexican Zapatistas (the Zapatista National Liberation Army, or EZLN) can be considered an Indian guerrilla movement merits discussion. The particular blend of circumstances that led to the foundation and later transformation of this movement, the unusual composition of its participants and their supporters, and the mix of ethnic, cultural, and traditionally leftist demands that comprise its stated political agenda, make the Zapatista movement an anomaly among both guerrilla organizations and indigenous movements in Latin America. The EZLN was created from the merging of two primary forces. The first was composed of a small group of nonindigenous, non-Chiapan intellectuals, formerly members of Mexico's seminal leftist guerrilla organizations, which were mostly dismantled by the Mexican army in the 1960s and 1970s. These revolutionaries moved their base of operations to eastern Chiapas, near the border with Guatemala in the early 1980s. The second force was composed of a small group of militant Indian activists who in 1977 decided to take up arms against the government. They split from the burgeoning nonviolent

indigenous political movement in Chiapas and migrated to the Lacandón jungle.

The EZLN was founded in 1983 by the combined Indian and non-Indian revolutionary forces in the Lacandón. The group failed to gain much attention or support until the early 1990s, when the collapse of international coffee prices, which bankrupted many *campesino* cooperatives, coincided with the abrupt suspension of agricultural subsidies and fueled increasing dissatisfaction among the state's indigenous population.³⁵ The product of the marriage of these two militant forces was an organization with the structure, strategy, military nomenclature, and much of the rhetoric of a Marxist armed movement, but with distinctively Indian features as well: a consensual, community-based method of decisionmaking; a political agenda that contains many of the substantive demands of the nonviolent indigenous movement of Chiapas, as well as its characteristic call for dignity, self-determination and respect for indigenous culture and identity; and a primarily Mayan membership, a significant number of whom speak only indigenous languages.

COUNTERDRUG POLITICS

Because of steep drops in world agricultural commodity prices and neoliberal reforms that removed state supports for peasant agriculture during the 1980s—which fueled unrest in Chiapas—hundreds of thousands of *campesinos* throughout Latin America now make their living growing marijuana, heroin poppies, or coca leaf. For many it is the only crop from which they can make a living, as drug traffickers pay cash up front and pick up the crop at its source, eliminating the need for long and costly trips to market centers. As growers, they are at the mercy of the region's mostly non-Indian drug traffickers, sometimes in collusion with the local military or police. In Peru and Colombia, links between the guerrillas and drug traffickers complicate the already volatile mix of interests in rural areas.

This violence against Indians is not due to discrimination but to the fact that the people who grow marijuana, heroin poppies, and coca in the Andean countries are Indians. Even when not involved as growers, they are the targets of paramilitary and drug cartels violence because they are involved in disputes over the land the

drug cartels occupy, legally or illegally. As noted elsewhere in this study, disputes over land are the main focus of violent altercations between Indians and non-Indians. Ethnicity is not a motivator of this drug-related violence, but it is an important factor in devising a solution to the problem: the authorities must be sensitive to the cultural issues involved in the violence against indigenous peoples because of their ties to the drug business.

In December of 1991, at a Colombian *hacienda* called *El Nilo*, 20 Paez Indians, including women and children, were gunned down by over 60 hooded gunmen. Human rights groups, Colombian indigenous organizations, and Colombian government officials have linked the killers to drug traffickers and members of the Colombian army in their employ, and attribute the massacre to a land dispute between the Indians and neighboring drug traffickers.³⁶ While the Colombian government and indigenous organizations have signed numerous agreements to halt the cultivation of poppies for heroin production, according to Jesús Avirama, a leader of the Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca, production continues today due to the government's repeated failure to fulfill promises of development assistance.³⁷

Coca production is the only source of income for the majority of the 300,000 *campesinos* of Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley, which is ideally suited for coca growing. The crop nets the growers from 4 to 34 times as much as cacao and corn, the leading alternative crops, and buyers come directly to the growers, eliminating the problem of hauling agricultural products to market down a deteriorating single access highway. The Shining Path has targeted the valley for its economic value and has come to control the region's lucrative drug trade, protecting growers from antidrug operations of the Peruvian government and extracting huge fees per flight from drug traffickers entering the area for pick ups.³⁸

President Fujimori has stressed, at least rhetorically, alternative crop production in Peru's effort to fight the drug war, a policy that conflicts with U.S. preference for eradication. The Bolivian government has taken a similar approach, given the dependence of a large part of Bolivia's indigenous population on coca production and the paucity of development alternatives. Nevertheless, according to Healy, the wealthy and strong drug-trafficking groups, not the coca growers, are the main obstacle to eradication. Moreover, the weight of the coca trade in the Bolivian

economy—worth 75 percent of the country's legal exports—is far greater in Bolivia than in the more diversified Colombian and Peruvian economies.³⁹

Healy estimates that some 500,000 indigenous farmers are involved in the coca trade. In Bolivia, where growing the traditional coca leaf for medicinal or traditional purposes is legal, the coca growers are represented by a well-organized and militant union, the National Association of Coca Producers (ANAPCOCA). Through it they have engaged in numerous public protests, hunger strikes, rallies, and road blockades to impede government efforts to control production and distribution of coca leaf. Some protests have ended in violence, such as a 1987 Cochabamba blockade that left six *campesinos* dead. The coca growers responded by occupying the Chapare offices of UMOPAR, the antidrug police. The UMOPAR killed 10 more peasants before the conflict ended, further fueling the militancy of the union. According to Healy a “police-state environment” prevails in the Chapare and growers are continually harassed by UMOPAR and agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.⁴⁰

On April 18, 1995, the Bolivian government ordered a 90-day state of siege to break up increasingly militant and disruptive strikes by teachers and other union activists, leading to almost daily clashes with police in La Paz. The government took advantage of the state of siege to arrest Evo Morales, leader of ANAPCOCA, and over 300 other labor leaders, jailing them in remote areas of the country. Five days later, over 100 coca growers protesting the incarceration of Morales were jailed in the Chapare, where they clashed with police and the army. While most of the jailed labor leaders were released 10 days later following a Church-mediated agreement, Morales remained in jail until the end of May.⁴¹

While alternative agricultural development appears to be the only option to wean the coca growers from dependence on the drug trade, the Chapare jungle, where the majority of coca leaf is cultivated and where *campesinos* from throughout the country have migrated in search of agricultural land, is a tropical rainforest unsuited for commercial agriculture. Given the lack of opportunities in other parts of the country for the 800,000-plus families living in the Chapare, the current situation is not likely to change in the near future.

CONCLUSION

Many countries in the Western Hemisphere are trying to address the challenges posed by the marginalization of indigenous peoples and the consequences of years of severe poverty, discrimination, and violence. Particularly urgent is the creation of a process for addressing the particular economic challenges indigenous peoples now encounter in the face of expanding regional and international trading regimes. In 1994, two violent altercations occurred between indigenous organizations and the military as responses to the adoption by governments of neoliberal economic policies that threatened the existence of Indian communities: the January 1994 Chiapas insurgency and the June 1994 demonstrations by Ecuadorean Indians protesting the government's unconstitutional promulgation of an agricultural modernization law that privatized water rights, removed protections for communal lands, and otherwise threatened smallholder agricultural interests.⁴² Five Indians died during the latter, which lasted several weeks and cut off food supplies to several major cities.

The economic policies that helped provoke these incidents are being implemented in other hemispheric countries, in preparation for subregional and hemispherewide economic integration. Peru's 1993 Constitution weakened legal protections for indigenous land tenure, and the process of privatizing water rights has already begun. The Council of All the Lands (Consejo de Todas Las Tierras), representing the Mapuche Indians, sponsored a meeting of 70 indigenous leaders from Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru during December 1994, in Temuco, Chile, to discuss the implications for Indians of NAFTA and pending free-trade arrangements. They are especially concerned about changes in access to land and natural resources, intellectual property protection of indigenous knowledge, economic development, and the weakening of their identity as indigenous peoples. At that meeting, Mapuche leader Aucán Huilcamán warned that the extension of NAFTA to Chile would cause, as in Mexico, the removal of protections for indigenous land rights. He called on the NAFTA parties to enact special protections of indigenous rights once Chile joins the pact.⁴³

The spirit of cooperation established by the December 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas provides the region's governments the opportunity to further the process of economic integration

throughout the hemisphere. However, while economic integration is a good thing, it is currently being done in ways that are destructive to indigenous communities and which provoke intense opposition on the part of Indians. Thus, regional governments should be more sensitive to these problems and take advantage of the climate of increased regional cooperation to promote a dialogue on the impact of economic policy on Indians. The result will be decreased interethnic hostility and violence between indigenous communities and the state, increased social peace (security), and democratic stability. In addition, security policies that endeavor to work with, rather than against, indigenous interests to dislodge guerrillas and drug traffickers and manage international borders would ease conflict and may lead to the demilitarization of indigenous territory.

The indigenous groups all work toward the same goal—reaching a *modus vivendi* between governments and Indians. There is no blanket solution for all, because there are so many complex issues involving so many different countries and cultural contexts. For example, deciding which agency of the military or police should enforce certain antidrug operations will depend on whether the state, national, or local police is the primary agent; whether drugs are a problem of specific regions; whether the police are more competent than the military; and what role the constitution provides for the police and military. These factors vary widely from country to country. Similarly, the posture of Indian groups toward state authority varies dramatically from the confrontational stance of Chile's Mapuche (who were severely repressed during the Pinochet regime) and the cooperative stance of the Colombian national and regional indigenous organizations, who mostly speak Spanish and have waged effective battles in the country's courts. The best strategy for each depends on the history of interethnic relations in each country (and within regions of each country) and the feasibility of a cooperative versus confrontational approach.

The most important focal point for change, nonetheless, is resolving indigenous land tenure rights. Most, if not all outbreaks of hostility have resulted from incursions on Indian lands, the basis of their economic and cultural stability and survival. Working to resolve this problem will encourage economic stability for Indian groups, contributing to political stability and national security.

NOTES

1. Although census information on ethnicity is unreliable, most estimates of the percentage of Indians in the total population in the region converge on the figure of 10 percent. This average belies the concentration of Indians in several countries where they comprise more than one-third of the population: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru. The indigenous population of Belize, Chile, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Suriname lies between 5 to 20 percent of the total population, while in the remainder of the countries in the hemisphere, Indians are less than 5 percent of the total [R. Jordan Pandor, "Desarrollo y Poblaciones Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe" (Instituto Indigenista Interamericano and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 1990); Nina Serafino, *Latin American Indigenous Peoples and considerations for U.S. Assistance* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 30 August 1991)].

2. James Brooke, "Peru's War With Ecuador Traps Indians" (*New York Times*, 2 February 1995); W. R. Long, "Peru-Ecuador War Hurts Indians on Both Sides" (*Los Angeles Times*, 9 February 1995).

3. *Amazon Update* (Washington, DC: Coalition in Support of Amazonian Peoples and their Environment, 20 February 1995).

4. Three Venezuelan navy infantrymen remain missing. A similar incident occurred in November 1994, in which two Venezuelan national guardsmen were killed ("Protest to Colombia," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 9 March 1995, 101; Reuters News Agency, 26 February 1995).

5. The other country in Latin America where indigenous affairs remain under the bureaucratic control of the military is Paraguay.

6. Carlos Frederico Marés de Souza, "On Brazil and Its Indians," in *Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Donna Lee Van Cott (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 213-234.

7. There are approximately 9,900 Yanomami in Brazil, most of whom live in a reserve in Roraima state created by the Collor administration the size of Portugal. The Macuxi number about 9,000 and also live in Roraima (LARR-Brazil 1995, 7). Under the 1988 Constitution, the federal government was committed to demarcating all lands traditionally occupied by Indians by October 1993. Of the 519 they were supposed to complete, 251 were completed by the deadline (Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, statement by Stephan Schwartzman before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, 14 July 1993, 3.

8. "Brazilian Senate Wishes to Review the Demarcation of Indian Lands" [Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council (CIMI), 21 December 1994]; "Row Over Indian Land Demarcation: Cardoso lobbied to Rule in

Favor of Private Interests" (*Latin American Weekly Report*, 13 July 1995), 7].

9. The Indian Council of Roraima reported in May of 1995 that, due to violence and diseases spread by the miners, the survival of the Yanomami is in doubt. In the last seven years, 21 percent of the population has died. The mortality rate is growing, while the birth rate has declined. Malaria, the most deadly disease, is believed to have infected 80 percent of the Yanomami, who lack access to basic healthcare. "Mortality Grows Among Yanomami" [Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council (CIMI), 3 May 1995].

10. U. S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1995).

11. "Urgent Action: Write Brazil's President and Justice Minister to Protest Police Action Against Macuxi Indians," Sao Paulo: Rainforest Action Network and ProIndian Commission of Sao Paulo, 10 January 1995; "Second Thoughts About the Yanomami. Pressure on the Biggest Reservation is Growing," *Latin American Regional Reports-Brazil*, 15 February 1995, 7.

12. "Federal Administration says it will Demarcate Krikati Indian Area" (Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council, 3 February 1995).

13. "Brazilian Senate Wishes to Review the Demarcation of Indian Lands" (Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council, 21 December 1994).

14. Relations between Indians and the military are also tense in Venezuela where, in February of 1994, three Yupca Indians were shot and killed by soldiers after Yupca women tried to prevent them from taking wood they had cut from Yupca territory (USDOS 1995) ["Urgent Action: Write Brazil's President and Justice Minister to Protest Police Action Against Macuxi Indians" (Sao Paulo: Rainforest Action Network and ProIndian Commission of Sao Paulo, 10 January 1995); "Brazilian Government Deals with Indian Matters as a National Security Issue" (Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council, 29 September 1994); "Brazilian Senate Wishes to Review the Demarcation of Indian Lands" (Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council, 21 December 1994); "Federal Administration says it will Demarcate Krikati Indian Area" (Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council, 3 February 1995)].

15. Van Cott, *Indigenous Peoples*; Jesús Avirama and Rayda Márquez, "The Indigenous Movement in Colombia," in Van Cott, 83-106; Richard N. Adams, "The Political Status of the Guatemalan Maya," in Van Cott, 155-186; María Isabel Remy, "The Construction of Democracy in Peru," in Van Cott, 107-130.

16. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994*.

17. Xavier Albó, "El retorno del indio," *Revista Andina* 9, no. 2 (December 1991): 310.

18. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994*.
19. Ibid.
20. Personal communication with Eusebio Castro, 8 March 1995.
21. Remy, 124.
22. Adams, 160.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Estuardo Zapeta, "Guatemala Peace Talks: Are Maya Rights Negotiable?" *Abya Yala News* 8, no. 4 (Winter, 1994): 26, 37.
26. The ILO Convention 169 (1989) has been signed by Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Norway, and Paraguay.
27. According to Adams, the government has consistently failed to create a legal definition of "indigenesness" or to grant special protections for indigenous rights or lands. There are five articles in the 1985 Constitution on "Indigenous Communities," but implementing legislation has not been promulgated (Adams, 156-8).
28. Zapeta, 7.
29. "Guatemala: Peace Talks on the Rocks," *Central America Report* (3 February, 1995): 7-8.
30. "The Maya vision of a new Guatemala: Beyond the peace talks, a package of thorny demands," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 9 March 1994, 534.
31. Ibid., 535.
32. According to Harvey Kline, the Quintín Lame was formed in 1984 [Harvey Kline, "Colombia: Building Democracy in the Midst of Violence and Drugs," Inter-American Dialogue Conference on Democratic Governance, Washington, DC, 11-12 December 1994; Avirama and Márquez, 88-89; "Why We Abandoned Our Guns. Quintin Lame Speaks," *Unidad Indígena* no. 99 (May), reprinted in *SAIIC Newsletter* 6, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring-Summer 1991): 10.]
33. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994*.
34. Xavier Albó, "And from Kataristas to MNRistas? The Surprising and Bold Alliance Between Aymaras and Neoliberals in Bolivia," in Van Cott, 79-21; Eduardo Gamarra, "Managing Bolivian Democracy in the 1990s," Inter-American Dialogue Conference on Democratic Governance, Washington, DC, 11-12 December 1994, 12.
35. David Clark Scott, "Chiapas Rebellion Sparks Indian Dissent Across Mexico," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 February 1994, 1.
36. Amnesty International, *The Americas: Human Rights Violations Against Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Amnesty International, 1992), 44-45; Avirama and Márquez, 90.
37. Personal communication with Jesús Avirama, December 1993.

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38. David Scott Palmer, "Peru, the Drug Business, and Shining Path: Between Scylla and Charybdis?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 34, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 68-70.

39. Kevin Healy, "Coca, the State, and the Peasantry in Bolivia, 1982-1988," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 30, nos. 2 and 3 (Summer/Fall 1989): 106; Kevin Healy, "The Role of Economic Development and the War on Drugs: A Focus on Peasant Development Prospects in Peru and Bolivia," manuscript, 1993.

40. Healy, "Coca, the State, and the Peasantry in Bolivia," 106-108, 115-116.

41. "Bolivian Government, unions reach agreement," Associated Press, 28 April 1995; "Sánchez de Lozada declares state of siege as strikers and clashes spread," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 4 May 1995, 1.

42. Donna Lee Van Cott, "Violence, Rebellion in Ecuador," *Journal of Commerce*, 14 July 1994, editorial page.

43. *Declaration of Temuco*, Consejo de Todas las Tierras, 2 December 1994; "Mapuche Indians ask for Legal Protection from NAFTA," *Andean Newsletter* 97 (December 1994): 2.

2. UNDERSTANDING ETHNIC POLITICS: The Role of External Variables in Brazil and Colombia

The sharp rise in ethnicity-based politics in Latin America in the last 20 years has been the subject of a growing literature in anthropology, sociology, and, recently, political science.¹ Anthropologists have focused on factors internal to the identity and organization of ethnic communities. Sociologists have studied Indian and black movements as social phenomena but have not isolated factors that distinguish ethnic movements from the rest. Political scientists have begun to look at external variables, such as the impact of structural adjustment and neoliberal reforms² and the failure of democratic institutions to secure individual rights,³ but they have also failed to convincingly tie these variables to the recent surge in ethnic politics.

This comparative study will isolate two external variables that may better explain the mid-1970s surge in Indian political activism in Latin America. It will focus in particular on: 1) the impact of the regional trend toward democratization, and 2) the role of international actors and pivotal events. These two countries were chosen because of their similar demograph; both have indigenous as well as significant black populations.

Issues such as culture and identity are crucial to understanding the origin and implications of indigenous organizations. These variables, however, fall outside the scope of this effort. Furthermore, while revealing comparisons will be made between indigenous and black movements, no attempt will be made to fully explore the emergence of black movements or their special situation.

In both countries, Indian policy has been intimately linked to issues of national security: in Brazil, to the military's obsession with control of the country's Amazonian borders; and in Colombia, to the suppression of drug traffickers and leftist guerrillas and the defense of human rights. In both countries the struggle over communal indigenous land rights is the focal point of violent conflict between indigenous communities and those who have invaded those lands or who seek to exploit the natural resources they contain. The Brazilian Government issued decree 1775, signed by President Cardoso on 8 January 1996, which allows "states, municipalities and other interested parties" to contest the borders of indigenous territories that were supposed to have been established in 1993, but whose demarcation has been delayed because of opposition from influential loggers, miners and ranchers. Indians now face the prospect of losing not only the more than 50 percent of designated lands that await demarcation but also those lands already adjudicated.

METHODOLOGY

The evident rise of ethnic identity in the mid-20th century has been described as a defensive reaction by threatened cultures to the process of modernization, the globalization of culture, and the delegitimation of communal identities in favor of identities defined in socio-economic terms.⁴ Daniel Bell also ties the rise of ethnic identification in the mid-20th century to a number of important international social and political trends that began with the student movements of the 1960s:

- The enlargement of political boundaries
- The increase in the number and type of political actors
- A questioning of the status quo and the current distribution of status and power at national and international levels
- Increasing international and intranational societal interaction because of advances in transportation and communications
- The breakdown of traditional and parochial beliefs
- The rapid pace of societal change.⁵

For once-isolated rural indigenous and black communities in Latin America, heightened awareness of ethnic identity is also a response

to territorial intrusions, and has intensified the traditional struggle for land throughout the region.⁶

In seeking to explain the emergence of ethnic organizations, *internal variables*—those more associated with the internal organization of ethnic communities, their cultural values and practices, and the expression of their ethnic identity—are distinguished from *external variables*, such as the structure of the political system in the country in which they live. *Contextual variables*—factors that have been present since the Conquest, although they may have varied in intensity—must be separated from *temporal variables*, which indicate important events and actors in the national and international arena.

Contextual variables that permeate the experience of indigenous peoples since the Conquest include a history of violent repression and domination, discrimination, poverty, and political exclusion. An additional contextual variable worth noting is the existence since pre-Columbian times of indigenous community organizations. The strongest organizations are those with an ancestral land base conducive to indigenous self-government, as well as a method for passing cultural and spiritual rites and beliefs on to younger generations. Indigenous community organizations are typically characterized by regular meetings and rotating leadership.

The discussion of temporal variables began in the 1960s (table 1) with the expansion, through advances in transportation and communications, of private and public sector activities into lands traditionally occupied by indigenous or black rural communities. At the same time, advances in healthcare increased population growth and pressure on land in rural areas. Oil and other precious resources were discovered by private or state (usually military) interests on lands claimed or occupied by indigenous tribes. Two international political trends are also important in understanding indigenous political activity during the 1960s and 1970s. First, the rise of Liberation Theology and the Catholic Church's new preferential option for the poor brought indigenous peasant and Amazonian communities increased support from Catholic and Protestant churches throughout Latin America. Second, the student movements of the 1960s and the growth of social movements in the following decade provided new opportunities for political

TABLE 1. *External Variables Influencing the Rise of Ethnic Movements in Latin America*

1960s-1970s	DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION	1980s	1988-89	1992	1993+
Expansion of private and public sector into indigenous lands in search of natural resources.	Elections, increased space for organizing, public expression.	Debt crisis. LAC countries cut spending on health, education, social services.	Fall of the Berlin Wall. End of the Cold War rationale of U.S. policy toward Latin America.	Quincentenary	United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples (1993)
Improvements in transportation and growing need for land brings colonists into indigenous territories.	Voting rights extended to illiterates, enfranchising many Indians and blacks for the first time.	Neoliberal economic policies: loss of subsidies and transfer payments on encroachments on Indian lands, particularly due to oil and mineral exploration.	Begin of international mobilization to pre-prepare a response to the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Euro-peans in the Americas.	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.	United Nations Decade of Indigenous Peoples launched (1994).

U.S. civil rights movement. Student movements in Europe and the United States.	Military repression decreases.	Privatization of agriculture increases competition for less efficient indigenous farms.	Jesse Jackson runs for president of the United States, inspiring blacks throughout the hemisphere.	Rigoberta Menchú wins Nobel Peace Prize.	Indigenous Peoples Fund opened in Bolivia (1994)
Rise of social movements. Rise of Guerrilla movements.	Expansion of social movements and new forms of organization	Continued expansion of social movements.	Advances in technology, communications, make fax machines and e-mail available to peace, environmental and political organizations.	Expansion of Internet provides new opportunities for international networking and information exchange at lower cost.	Victor Hugo Cardenas, Aymara Indian, elected Vice President of Bolivia (1993)
Rise of Liberation Theology and evangelical movements. Decolonization in Africa.		Decline of left. Beginning of rise of ethnic/cultural orientation of politics. Environmental movement begins to fund Indian organizations in Amazon.	Anniversary of abolition of slavery, Brazil.	United States, Mexico and Canada sign NAFTA.	Mexican Indians in Chiapas state launch armed rebellion (1994) Chile asked to accede to NAFTA at hemispheric summit (1994)

participation to individual and collective social actors excluded from formal politics. Black activists in particular note the importance of the civil rights movement in the United States, as well as the decolonization of African countries, to the awakening and construction of black consciousness and politics in the 1960s.⁷

The next period of interest was the global wave of democratic transition that began in 1974. Though not experiencing a shift from military to civilian rule, Colombia and Mexico underwent important democratizing reforms during the early 1990s. Most of the prominent Indian organizations in the hemisphere today were established in the mid-1970s—before the regional wave of democratization began. Nevertheless, the democratic transition increased the effectiveness and reach of these organizations by opening space for the public expression of the needs of diverse sectors of society and stimulating the formation of community organizations and social movements that often worked together with existing or emerging Indian organizations. For countries returning to regular elections, the extension of voting rights to the illiterate enfranchised large numbers of indigenous peoples.

In the 1980s a number of international trends had a broad impact on national politics in the region. The regionwide debt crisis forced most countries in the region to slash social spending in exchange for debt relief. The new model of economic development prescribed by lenders forced a transformation of the state, while opening protected and inefficient markets to international trade. For rural peoples, this new economic model meant the loss of agricultural subsidies, marketing assistance, and transfer payments, as well as increasing encroachments on Indian and peasant lands due to the expansion of the private sector. It is important, however, not to overstate the direct impact of neoliberal reforms during the 1980s on ethnic-based political activity, for three reasons:

- Numerous indigenous organizations already existed at the time reforms were instituted.
- While many incorporated an analysis of the impact of these reforms on the poor into their political rhetoric, the main focus of indigenous movements continued to be cultural revindication, dignity, autonomy, and land.
- Most rural and Amazonian indigenous communities never received the public services—health care, potable water,

electricity, sewerage, roads—that were cut as a result of the reforms.

The key link between liberalizing reforms and indigenous mobilization is changes in land policies threatening communal land tenure. Efforts to privatize Indian lands result from

- Pressure from local elites to acquire this land
- Reforms required of debtor nations by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank
- Modernization of the agricultural sector in order to better compete on international markets and join free trade agreements.

Existing indigenous organizations focused intense efforts to halt or reverse the privatization of communal land in Brazil (in 1978), in Mexico (in 1993-1995), in Ecuador (1994-1995), and in Peru (in late 1993).

Two transnational political trends are of particular importance during the 1980s and early 1990s: the decline of the orthodox leftist political parties and the rise of the environmental movement. While during the 1960s-1970s indigenous organizations tended to work within the political Left, particularly within the union movement, classist organizations have always rejected the Indians' explicitly cultural analysis and excluded Indians from positions of leadership. By the 1980s, and increasingly with the decline of the Left, Indians had returned to or initiated their own political organizations, building local, regional, national, and even international networks. The ecological movement, which expanded dramatically in the 1970s, increasingly became involved in international issues in the 1980s. A particular area of concern to North American and European organizations was the fate of the Amazon rainforest. Amazon Indians formed alliances with northern nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in order to finance their own campaigns to recover and title ancestral lands and to prevent the invasion of colonists, miners, the military, and oil companies. Conferences bringing together northern ecologists and southern Indians were held in Altamira, Brazil (1989), and Iquitos, Peru (1991); these meetings facilitated partnerships resulting in a strong presence by Indian organizations and their supporters at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.⁸ The timing of the cementing of the environmental-Indian alliance (1989-1992)

coincided with an additional international phenomenon that would have an even greater impact on ethnic political organizing in Latin America: the marking of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Western Hemisphere.

Plans for the "500 Years of Resistance Campaign" (the Campaign) were hatched at an international meeting for indigenous and grassroots groups held in Quito, Ecuador, in 1987. The idea was to use state-sponsored celebrations of the quincentenary, which were planned to take place during 1992, to challenge the official history of the Conquest and reinterpret it from the point of view of native peoples.⁹ In addition to building international networks that would nurture local ethnic organizations in the following years, the Campaign was instrumental in heightening awareness of and defining "Indian" identity and generating renewed interest in indigenous culture and language among indigenous peoples themselves as well as the general public. Indigenous groups involved in the Campaign recovered and renewed traditional cultural identities and generated *new* identities based on a reinterpretation of shared history.¹⁰ The internationalization of individual Indian communities' quests to reinterpret and dignify particularistic ethnic identities helped to create a pan-Indian identity spanning vast geographic and cultural barriers. Moreover, intensive national and international encounters among Indians helped to crystallize a comprehensive set of indigenous demands that tend to be consistent among diverse indigenous communities throughout the region.¹¹

In August of 1991, the revindications of blacks in the Americas officially were added to the Campaign, in response to recognition by participants in a regional meeting in Guatemala that black organizations were not well-represented in the movement.¹² The Campaign was a successful attempt to unite localized struggles of diverse peoples in order to challenge and redefine national identities and to articulate a common analysis of global forces, multinational corporations, communications media, financial institutions, and North American and European political and economic ideologies perceived to be threatening the existence of local ethnic communities.¹³

Finally, a number of events in the past 6 years, listed in the right-hand columns of table 1, have had significant repercussions on ethnic movements in Latin America. Among the most important

were the U.N. Year of Indigenous Peoples (1993) and the award of the 1992 Nobel Peace to Guatemalan Indian activist Rigoberta Menchu.

BRAZIL

Brazil is the most populous and ethnically diverse country in South America, with a total population of 140 million, of which about half are considered to be of African descent, and about 0.2 percent Indian.¹⁴ While historians estimate that in 1500 there were approximately 5 million Indians in Brazil, today they number approximately 250,000. In the last 10 years the population has been decimated by malaria brought by *garimpeiros* (goldminers) and other intruders in indigenous territories. Despite their small number, they comprise 200 separate ethnic groups and speak 170 languages.¹⁵ They are widely dispersed, although 90 percent are concentrated in the 2 million square miles of Amazon Basin located in Brazil, of which Indian reservations make up 18 percent.¹⁶ That concentration is due to the movement of Portuguese colonists from east to west, and south to north, pushing the Indians further into the isolated areas near Brazil's northern borders.¹⁷ Most live in 519 recognized indigenous areas (251 of which are "fully demarcated") that comprise 10 percent of the national territory. By contrast, 48.5 percent of the country's land is held by large farms and 21.7 percent is unused, according to the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Center (CEDI).¹⁸ Brazil is among the world's most unequal countries; some 58 percent of Brazilians existed on less than \$58 per month in 1992.¹⁹

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Brazilian government intensively promoted the colonization and development of the Amazon by timber, cattle and mining interests, as well as poor, land-hungry farmers from the northeast and south of the country.²⁰ In the 1980s, development of the Amazon rapidly accelerated, spurred by massive transportation infrastructure projects and hydroelectric dams, which brought more colonists. The government revoked forest clearance incentives in 1987 under international pressure to preserve the rainforest, although Brazil continues to subsidize the lucrative timber industry.²¹ The efforts of Indian organizations and their supporters to stop unrestricted development of the Amazon during a time that the Brazilian political system was gradually opened to

democratic competitive elections led to a prominent role for the country's tiny Indian population in the 1988 constitutional reform.

The relaxation of military repression in the 1970s was both a cause and a result of opposition political mobilization. Outlawed organizations were legalized and new forms of organization initiated. The democratic opening in Brazil facilitated the political organization of the country's tiny and isolated indigenous population, letting loose nonindigenous social forces—left-leaning political parties, human rights organizations, and environmental groups—that would be able to support the Indian rights agenda and provide a forum, the Constitutional Assembly, for a national dialogue on Indian rights.

In 1970, Indian peoples in Brazil organized the first assembly of indigenous peoples independent of the government. Other assemblies followed, Indian organizations multiplied, and NGOs specifically created to support Indian rights began to emerge. As the democratic transition gained momentum after 1974, so did the pro-Indian rights and other social and grassroots movements. Countering the influence of the grassroots and leftist movements have been the growth of business, ranching, and conservative political organizations.²²

Throughout the 1970s, Indian groups joined with non-Indian NGOs to protest the destruction of indigenous lands and culture by development and uncontrolled colonization. The emergence of indigenous organizations on the political scene occurred in response to the 1978 campaign by the Ministry of the Interior to reform the 1973 Indian Statute (Law 6001), which had placed Indians under the tutelage of the state. The plan was to “emancipate” the Indian from state tutelage and forcibly integrate him into modern Brazilian society. The real objective was to “emancipate” Indian lands, bringing them onto the marketplace and breaking up the communal land system in order to provide land for poor colonists as well as wealthy speculators. This attack on Indian lands brought a new interlocutor into the national debate on the “Indian question”: the Indians themselves. The resolve of the Indians defeated the government's campaign and transformed the image of the Indian in Brazilian society from a savage or a museum piece to an embattled underdog in solidarity with other exploited sectors of society. The Indians won the respect of a sector of public opinion that developed into a constituency for Indians rights in the 1980s, when

missionaries, academics, anthropologists, doctors, lawyers, judges and journalists formed a network of support organizations with a national profile in the National Commission of Associations in Support of the Indian.²³ In the context of a slow and carefully studied transition from military to civilian rule, the Indians forced the military government to choose between repression and recognition of Indian land and rights.²⁴

In 1979 the first national indigenous organization directed exclusively by Indians was founded.²⁵ The Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI) did not formally represent the country's diverse Indian ethnic groups but rather became a forum for Indians to express their demands and a nexus for leaders to interact with national and international support organizations.²⁶ In 1982 a Xavante Indian, Mario Jaruna, became the first Indian elected to Congress after influential friends in Rio de Janeiro secured a slot for Jaruna on the Democratic Labor Party (PTD) slate representing Rio de Janeiro state.²⁷

The bluntly outspoken Jaruna became a national symbol of opposition to Brazil's military dictatorship. His unprecedented rise to national prominence rested on his ability to demonstrate that Xavante frustrations with the dictatorship aligned with the political frustrations of the general Brazilian public.²⁸

At this time Kayapó, Pataxó, Terena, and Guaraní leaders established a presence in the Brazilian capital in order to sensitize public opinion to the problems of Indians. Their efforts were instrumental in getting indigenous rights on the agenda of the Constitutional Assembly and led to the introduction by political parties of indigenous themes in their programs for the first time.²⁹ In 1985, following the inauguration of President José Sarney, the first post-transition president, the Indian rights issue gained political saliency by highlighting many unresolved issues in Brazilian politics related to minority and human rights. The movement was countered by conservatives who denounced the indigenous movement as being under the control of foreigners seeking to internationalize the Amazon and rob Brazil of its resources and national sovereignty.³⁰

During the Constitutional Assembly of 1987-1988, the UNI led efforts to include a chapter protecting indigenous rights in the new

constitution, working alongside a coalition of anthropologists, NGOs, environmentalists and lawyers. The resulting "Indian Chapter" explicitly reversed the government's policy of assimilation, recognized the cultural rights of Indians, and guaranteed protection of the lands needed for their survival and cultural development.³¹ The 1988 Constitution recognized the existence of collective ethnic rights for the first time and acknowledged the legitimacy of Indian social structures and community autonomy. It also recognized for the first time the rights of descendants of *quilombos*, communities established in remote areas by runaway slaves, and requires the state to issue land titles to these communities. An estimated half million blacks—twice the Indian population—could benefit from this clause, but as of late 1995, the first *quilombo* titles had yet to be issued and land conflicts between their members and mining and ranching interests in the northern Amazon are intense.³²

This dramatic change in the relationship between the Indian and the Brazilian state was led by the indigenous organizations, particularly by leader Ailton Krenak and the Kayapó, who used their political and media savvy to counter a virulent campaign against indigenous rights led by conservative newspapers. Indians active in the constitutional reform, however, did not formally represent particular indigenous nations or communities.³³ The vast cultural diversity of Brazil's indigenous groups, and the divide that separates these groups from the national political culture, has resulted in a marked disparity between the hundreds of local community organizations and the small elite of sophisticated leaders who speak Portuguese and regularly attend international conferences but often lack local legitimacy.³⁴

Following the success of the pro-Indian coalition in the Constitutional Assembly, members of the Indian rights coalition established a nongovernmental legal office in Brasilia, the Nucleus for Indigenous Rights. Its staff of non-Indian lawyers monitors congressional activity and files lawsuits to protect collective rights.³⁵ The pro-Indian coalition has been successful in organizing across formerly hostile and widely dispersed ethnic groups and with nonindigenous organizations to fight against logging and ranching that threatened Indian livelihoods and lands. The most dramatic instance of successful Indian organizing since the Constitutional Assembly was a February 1989 demonstration organized by the

Kayapó to stop a \$500 million World Bank loan for construction of a dam on the Xingú River.

The Brazilian Government responded by bringing charges of conspiring against the national interest against the chiefs, along with an American anthropologist, under the so-called Law of Foreigners. Summoned to give testimony at the federal courthouse in Belem, the Kayapó showed their superior command of public relations techniques—some 400 warriors and three dozen chiefs in full ceremonial dress and armed with clubs and spears turned up to confront riot-control police armed with automatic weapons before the world press. International pressure soon coaxed the government to drop its case.³⁶ The success of the Kayapó dramatically changed Indians' views of what they could accomplish and inspired other groups to defend their traditional lands.³⁷

Since 1988, there has been a steep rise in the number of nontraditional indigenous organizations with regular contacts outside the local community. Carlos Marés lists 23 Indian organizations in Amazonas state alone, 15 of which were established in 1988 or later.³⁸ Today, the most influential organization is the Coordinating Group of Indigenous People of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB). It represents Brazilian Indians in COICA, the international confederation that unites the major indigenous organizations of Amazon countries and works with the Amazon Coalition, a Washington-based NGO established in 1993 by a consortium of northern environmental and Indian rights groups to support the work of Amazon Indian organizations. The primary Brazilian organizations working on behalf of the Indians are the Indianist Missionary Council (CIMI), the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (CEDI), the Council for Promotion of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations (CAPOIB), and the Nucleus for Indigenous Rights. The CIMI, led by a Catholic bishop, was formed in 1971, marking a reversal in the attitude of the Catholic Church from the conversion of Indians into Catholics, to intervention between the Indians and the Brazilian state on behalf of the preservation of Indian culture and community autonomy. It has been the most consistent critic of the indigenous agency, FUNAI and maintains a presence throughout the country. Since 1973-1974, CIMI has promoted regional assemblies of leaders of Indian nations, encouraging the collective design of strategies of resistance, and enabling Indians to form a collective Indian

consciousness as autonomous minorities within the Brazilian interior.³⁹

Since the scheduled constitutional review in October of 1993, governors and legislators from Amazon states have been pushing for a halt to further demarcation of indigenous lands and the review of existing reserves. In December of 1994 the Brazilian Senate passed a that requires a review by the National Defense Council of all demarcations of Indian land in frontier zones and directs the president to consult with the relevant state government prior to sending plans for demarcation to Congress for approval. According to the Indianist Missionary Council, this effectively makes demarcation of indigenous lands unfeasible any where in Brazil. In June 1995, the Brazil Justice Minister was considering the revocation of the 1991 decree ordering the demarcation of all Indian lands and allowing non-Indians to contest past and future Indian claims.⁴⁰ The national congress and justice minister continue to press for the repeal of constitutional indigenous land rights, against opposition from indigenous groups, NGOs, the Brazilian Bar Association and representatives of the European Parliament, which condemned the new policy in a February 1996 decree.

Mobilization of Black Organizations

Much as it nurtured the indigenous movement, the *abertura's* fostering of civil society created the conditions under which black political opposition could emerge.⁴¹ As Winant explains, "not long after the *abertura* began in earnest (in 1974), the first attempts at national black movement-building were initiated by the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU), and throughout the later transition period a slow but steady buildup of black opposition voices, actions and organizational initiatives was underway."⁴² While only rarely organizing as blacks, Afro-Brazilians were intimately involved in the urban slum organizations, the northeastern land movements, unions, and cultural, religious, and student organizations. Later, more black organizations, like the MNU, established in 1978, and black publications emerged.

Black leaders such as Abdias do Nascimento, a federal deputy representing the same party as Mario Jaruna, were involved in the major political parties, while other leaders rejected the parties as not being sufficiently committed to racial equality. Black organizations continue to be divided among afrocentric and more pluralistic

groups, over the relationship of race to class, and between issue-oriented politics and cultural and religious organizations.⁴³ This activity has involved only a small minority of the black population and has had little political impact, because of reasons discussed by Winant and Skidmore. In 1976 the Brazilian Government published for the first time employment and income data correlated by race that proved the existence of heretofore denied racial discrimination and refuted traditional explanations of the low economic status of blacks. Still, there has been very little political activity by blacks and "vast inequalities . . . stubbornly resist political articulation."⁴⁴

International Actors and Events

While increasingly strong at the local level, indigenous organizations have powerful enemies. Their successes generated a violent backlash on the part of ranchers, loggers, and the military and local authorities.⁴⁵ According to CIMI, CEDI, and the U.S. State Department, pervasive violence against Indians occurs with impunity. The massacre of at least 16 Yanomami Indians by goldminers on the Venezuelan border in August of 1993 brought Brazilian and international attention to the problem, yet no one has been punished for that crime. No one has ever been convicted of killing an Indian in Brazil. The constant invasions of indigenous lands, delays in demarcating indigenous territory, and violence on the part of *garimpeiros*, landowners, the military and police have made the indigenous organizations dependent on national and international support groups who have the power to mobilize international public information campaigns to put pressure on the Brazilian Government to intercede on behalf of Indians' constitutional rights against the interests of powerful local and state interests who covet Indian lands and resources.⁴⁶

International groups, however, have become something of a domestic political liability, in that they fuel the xenophobia of the Brazilian military, as well as a view of Indians as unable to work on their own behalf.⁴⁷ The most important international actors have been environmental groups, which have publicized the plight of the Amazonian Indians as part of an effort to protect the rainforest they inhabit from uncontrolled development. These groups pressured the U.S. Congress in the late 1980s and early 1990s to force the multilateral banks to create and implement guidelines to protect the environment and the tribal peoples that are displaced by

development projects in the Amazon. Environmental groups work in conjunction with Indian rights organizations such as New York-based *Amanaka'a*, Boston's Cultural Survival, and Washington's Indian Law Resource Center, to bring Brazilian Indian and union leaders—such as Chico Mendes, Davi Yanomami, and Kayapó leader Paulinho Paiakan—to meetings of the multilateral banks and the United Nations, and to Congressional hearings in Washington. In addition, information networks like the South and Meso-American Indian Information Center help to transmit urgent action requests and information about indigenous organizations' problems and activities throughout the world via the Internet and in their quarterly magazine, *Abya Yala News*, published in English and Spanish.

The apex of north-south cooperation on behalf of Indian rights in Brazil was reached immediately following the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This conference garnered Brazil's Indians enormous media attention and helped to cement alliances with support groups throughout the world, including contacts made at a 1990 Brazilian meeting of the 500 Years of Resistance Campaign. Immediately prior to UNCED, in December of 1991, then-President Collor demarcated a 37,400 square mile reserve (about the size of Austria) in the Amazon for 9,000 Yanomami. However, since the impeachment of President Collor in 1992, there has been more pressure in Brazil to roll back Indian rights than support to expand them.

While international events like UNCED and the quincentenary have been instrumental in supporting the mobilization of an Indian political opposition, to the extent that blacks have organized at all, national events have played a more important role since the *abertura*. In striking similarity to the reaction of Indians in Latin America to the 1992 quincentenary, a minority of politicized blacks in Brazil organized demonstrations around the 1988 celebration of the centennial of abolition, repudiating what they called the “farce of abolition” and the government's view of a country that had long since burst the bonds of racial domination. “These were unprecedented efforts to draw national and international attention to the extensive racial inequality and discrimination which Brazilian blacks . . . continue to confront.”⁴⁸

According to Skidmore, however, this small group of militants was drowned out by the mass of self-congratulatory Brazilians.⁴⁹

The 1995 celebrations by black cultural and political organizations that commemorated the fall of the independent runaway slave republic of Palmares in 1695—which attempted to make a national hero of Zumbi, the warrior king of Palmares—have received more attention. This is due to a steady increase in black political opposition since 1990, and the more vocal political dialogue on race and ethnic rights that was part of the 1994 presidential election campaign. The *quilombo* movement is using the attention given to Palmares to push for the titling of traditional lands of black communities, which had been promised by the 1988 Constitution.⁵⁰

COLOMBIA

Colombia's ethnic diversity is second only to Brazil's in South America. Its indigenous population comprises 81 distinct ethnic groups speaking 64 languages. Estimates of Colombia's black population range widely from a census figure of 15 percent to claims of black organizations as high as 45 percent.⁵¹ As in Brazil, the black population can be divided into traditional rural communities located principally along rivers in the Pacific Coast interior (descendants of fortified runaway slave communities called *palenques* in Colombia), and the much more numerous coastal and urban population. While the government estimates that Indians are 1.5% of the population, the National Organization of Colombian Indians (ONIC) estimates there are 700,000 Indians making up 2.3% of the total population of 35 million. As in Brazil, they are widely dispersed among 27 of the country's 32 administrative-political divisions, with the greatest concentration in the Amazon, Orinoquia, the Pacific Coast, Guajira Peninsula, and Andean zone.⁵² Colombia falls in the middle range in terms of income distribution, far more equal than Brazil. While poverty has decreased in recent decades (40 percent of the population lived in poverty in 1991, compared to 70 percent in 1961), poverty is more visible in the cities and land distribution has become more inequitably distributed, following a regressive agrarian "reform" in 1970-1971. Although Colombia did not suffer from the syndrome of heavy foreign debts and dramatic cuts in social spending that plagued

most Latin American countries in the 1980s, social spending was cut in the 1980s, in part because of reallocated funds to the military.⁵³

While there have always been violent struggles over land between Colombian Indians and landowners, struggles in the Cauca region in the 1960s gave birth to a nationwide indigenous movement. Indians organized in the 1960s to demand government compliance with Law 135 of 1961, which called for the expansion of Indian *resguardos* (the inalienable communal property of indigenous communities, governed by councils called *cabildos* under Colombian law) according to the cultural, social, and economic development necessary for the survival of the indigenous communities, as well as Law 89 of 1890, which returned to indigenous communities lands that legitimately belonged to them according to their titles and possession. They also demanded that the government cease encouraging colonization of Indian *resguardos*.⁵⁴

Landholding patterns in the 1960s reflected the Cauca's colonial past. The area has both the country's greatest concentration of indigenous people (about 40 percent of the total indigenous population) and of landholdings: two percent of large landowners (having more than 100 hectares each) own 45 percent of the land, while 61.4 percent of owners have fewer than 5 hectares a piece.⁵⁵ As a result, there has been a long history of land conflict in the Cauca and of indigenous uprisings in defense of territory. Large haciendas with *terrajeros* (landless farmers who worked a small plot of hacienda land in exchange for labor services) were interspersed with *resguardo* lands, governed by Indian *cabildos*. The same territory was governed by both municipal authorities, reflecting the interests of the haciendas, and *cabildo* authorities, which in the 1960s were often supportive of local power structures. As demographic pressure on lands increased, municipal authorities seized *resguardo* lands for nonindigenous settlement. By seizing Indian lands, the municipal authorities were taking not only the land but the Indians' authority to govern it.⁵⁶ In the late 1960s, *terrajeros* on particular haciendas, predominantly from the Paez ethnic group that had formerly governed the area, began to organize themselves independently of each other to recuperate ancestral lands in the Paez way—by working it. Successfully recuperated lands were attached to the local indigenous *cabildo*. In this way,

the *cabildos* gained strength from their growing land base and the activism of the indigenous communities. "Combative *cabildos*" began to distance themselves from the local bosses.

In February 1971, the Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca (CRIC) was formed from the leaders of *cabildos* involved in the land movement. Its original goals were to reclaim traditional territories, expand existing ones, and train indigenous leaders and bilingual teachers in order to defend their history, customs, languages, and legal systems. In the next 20 years the indigenous communities of the Cauca Valley recuperated almost 130,000 acres of land by obtaining enforcement of legal entitlements.⁵⁷

In the early 1970s a split emerged in the Cauca indigenous movement. One sector worked to acquire property and services from the government, in solidarity with other sectors of society, and tended to work within the *campesino* organization (the National Association of Peasant Producers, ANUC) or the Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca (CRIC), led by the more acculturated sectors of the indigenous population. As the peasant movement disintegrated in the 1980s, the CRIC became the more senior partner in the alliance, and continues to provide organizational support for local ANUC affiliates.⁵⁸ The other tendency in the movement, led principally by the Paeces and the Guambianos, organized according to ethnic group and strove to assert historical rights as peoples under Colombian law and to assert the legitimacy of traditional ethnic authorities.⁵⁹

Indian leaders gained national attention through participation in peasant and labor conventions in 1973 and 1974,⁶⁰ but the indigenous movement would gain its greatest notoriety and achieve its first moment of national unity in response to the Colombian government's attempt in 1979 to reorganize its indigenous agency and reformulate the legal and constitutional rights of indigenous communities. The explicit purpose of the changes was to subdue the increasingly militant and autonomous indigenous *cabildos* and organizations, to intervene in their relations with external actors, and to transform indigenous *cabildos* and organizations from government opponents and autonomous political actors into clients firmly under the tutelage of the state. As Gros notes, the Colombian government's actions are strikingly similar to those taken by the Brazilian military government in 1978. Both attempted to suppress an increasingly militant and autonomous indigenous movement; to

dismantle the Indian communal land tenure regime; to create a new legal definition of the Indian; and place the authority for deciding who was or was not Indian in the hands of the government. And in both countries, the result was exactly the opposite of what the government had intended; the government proposals solidified indigenous opposition to government policy, transcending the local and ethnic differences that had previously divided the widely dispersed indigenous populations of both countries. After a year of intense lobbying for public support by both the indigenous organizations and the Colombian government, the original proposal was withdrawn.⁶¹

The government's revised proposal—also unacceptable to the indigenous leadership—was the main topic of Colombia's first national indigenous conference, held in Lomas de Hilarco, Tolima, in October 1980. Participants established a "National Coordinating Junta" to prepare the consolidation of indigenous organizations at the regional level with a view toward unifying a national indigenous movement.⁶² In 1982 the National Organization of Indians of Colombia (ONIC) was founded to coordinate national efforts from its headquarters in Bogotá. The majority of activity in the indigenous movement, however, continues to occur at the community level.⁶³ In 1977, a rival organization to the CRIC was established, Governors on the March, which later changed its name to Southwest Indigenous Authorities. In 1991, it changed its name to the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO).⁶⁴ The growing importance of culture and tradition in the indigenous movement deepened the split between the ethnically organized *cabildos*, represented by AICO, and the more pan-Indian, regionally based movement, headed by the CRIC, although the latter had always included cultural revindications in its program. The unity of the indigenous movement also is continuously challenged by the extreme isolation of many indigenous communities, some of which are only accessible by boat or plane and lack mail service and telephones. Regional and ethnic differences are also important in setting the differing priorities of regional movements.⁶⁵

The success of the indigenous organizations in recuperating their lands elicited an immediate repressive response from landowners in the region, backed up by expanded paramilitary forces. In 1975, landowners founded the Cauca Regional Agrarian Committee (CRAC), which, with the support of local authorities,

repressed indigenous political organizing with impunity over the next decade. By 1978, 80 CRIC leaders had been assassinated,⁶⁶ and by the end of the 1990s, over 400 Colombian indigenous leaders had been murdered by landowners, guerrillas, or drugtraffickers.⁶⁷ Violence between Indians and landowners was compounded by the expansion of armed insurgencies in the 1970s. The oldest guerrilla organization in Colombia, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), bases its operations in the Cauca. Indian communities became the target of violence on the part of guerrillas trying to force the Indian organizations to support the insurgency, and the military and police, who believed the Indians supported the guerrillas. Official harassment following the state of siege declared by the government in 1978 included ordinances against travel and political organization activities, as well as the incarceration and torture of Indian leaders.⁶⁸ In order to protect themselves from the spiralling violence, in the early 1980s Cauca Indians formed the *Quintín Lame*, an armed organization, to defend the communities and their leaders.⁶⁹

Democratization

By the 1980s, pressure had developed to redistribute political power and expand the hegemony of the negotiated two-party alternating system of elite rule. As in Brazil, "the process of constitutional reform opened a space into which issues about ethnicity and nationality could be thrust."⁷⁰ President Virgilio Barcos Vargas (1986-1990) pursued a policy of decentralizing and de-concentrating political power in Colombia, building on the plans of his predecessor Belisario Betancur (1982-1986). The first direct mayoral elections were held in 1988, and plans were made for a constitutional assembly in 1990, charged with reform of the 1886 Constitution.⁷¹ Participants represented the various political parties, as well as the armed insurgencies with whom the government was trying to negotiate an end to hostilities. As a result of a decade of organizing at the regional level, Indians were elected to two seats in the 70-seat Constitutional Convention, in addition to the one granted to the *Quintín Lame*, which had been negotiating a peace settlement with the government.⁷² The two indigenous seats were held by leaders of ONIC and the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO), together representing 40 local and regional

organizations. In addition to the official delegates, a delegation of 36 cabildo governors from Tolima and Cauca, along with representatives of several indigenous and campesino organizations in those departments, attended sessions of the Constitutional Assembly in June of 1991.⁷³

The Constitutional Assembly coincided with the Indian organizations' preliminary planning meetings for the quincentenary. The 500 Years of Resistance Campaign was officially launched at an international meeting in Bogotá in 1989. Publicity surrounding that conference helped to generate sympathy for indigenous peoples in Colombian society immediately prior to the constitutional reform.

The provisions protecting indigenous culture, territories, and rights that the Indian delegates were able to secure in the July 4, 1991, Constitution are truly revolutionary. Article 176 created a Special Electoral District (CEE) for two indigenous seats in the 102-seat senate. Under Article 286, indigenous lands are recognized as Indigenous Territorial Entities (ETIS) and indigenous communities are granted a range of autonomous powers to define their own development strategies, choose their own authorities, and administer public resources, including local and national taxes.⁷⁴ According to Jesús Avirama, a leader of the CRIC, the Indians were able to play such a prominent role in the constitutional process due to the disarray and disunity of the union and popular movements, the devolution into violence of the armed groups on the left, and corruption and division within traditional parties. The indigenous movement demonstrated greater unity and organizational cohesion than much larger sectors, and was seen as the only "clean" sector that could present a political alternative.⁷⁵

The Indigenous Social Alliance (ASI) was created in 1991 to contest the first elections following the reforms and unites indigenous with peasant, black, and urban organizations, primarily in the Andean region. It also incorporated demobilized members of the defunct *Quintín Lame*.⁷⁶ The ASI differs from the other two indigenous organizations in its policy of solidarity with non-indigenous groups. In 1992, three different indigenous lists were put forward for the senate and chamber of deputies elections: two, representing ONIC and AICO, ran under the special Indian district, while the ASI competed in the national race. As a result of the unexpected success of the ASI, in 1992, Indians were elected to

three rather than the two constitutionally mandated seats in the senate, and five Indians won seats in the lower chamber. Once in congress, however, because of their small number in the senate, and to the political inexperience of the indigenous representatives, they have not been able to accomplish as much as they had hoped.⁷⁷ According to one of the first Indian senators, Gabriel Muyuy Jacanamejoy of ONIC, their work was also hampered by the lack of resources necessary to travel around the country and consult with indigenous communities.⁷⁸

Following the exhilarating success of the 1992 elections for the indigenous movement and the attention given indigenous issues during the quinquennial year, the movement hit an impasse. Electoral participation became, in the words of a past ONIC president, "one of the worst headaches that the indigenous movement in Colombia has endured."⁷⁹ Eight different indigenous lists contested the 1994 elections, with three registered in the special Indian district, and five registered as parties in the National Electoral District, reflecting the many splits within an indigenous movement that represents a population of at most 700,000 persons. According to Palma and Gutiérrez of ONIC, the vote is split even within particular ethnic groups, voters do not know for whom to vote, and abstention is high. As a result, in 1994, only two Indians won senate seats. Although literacy was removed as a voting requirement in the 1930s, high abstention among blacks and Indians, because of their remote location and the low presence of the civilian state in rural areas, persists. This is not unusual, however, given a total abstention rate of 70 percent for the 1994 congressional elections.⁸⁰

Mobilization of Black Organizations

Black activists also mobilized to influence the constitutional reform process. In the Cauca and on the Pacific Coast, indigenous organizations often worked to defend their land rights in conjunction with black communities, whose traditional lands also suffered increasing incursions in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1970s, an urban elite of students and graduates on the Pacific Coast began to self-identify as black. Cimarrón, the National Movement for the Human Rights of Black Communities in Colombia, was established in 1982 from a study group founded in 1976 by university students. The name evokes the *cimarrones*, runaway

slaves of the colonial era, who the organization promotes as the heroes of Colombian blacks and a symbol of black resistance. It also invokes U.S. heroes like Martin Luther King, the Black Panthers and Malcolm X.⁸¹

While deriving inspiration from the U.S. civil rights movement, Pacific Coast organizations also were influenced by the development of the Indian movement in this region and in the nearby Cauca, where black and Indian communities lived in close proximity. In the 1980s, the two ethnic groups struggled over land and natural resources as colonization and development was encouraged by the government on the Pacific Coast as part of a national strategy to cultivate trade ties in the Pacific. Noting the success of the indigenous movement in mobilizing national support networks and achieving land victories, the black movements consciously set about to emulate the agenda and rhetoric of the regional and indigenous movements. They never achieved the success of the Indians, however, due in part to the far lesser financial and logistical support they received from national and international actors.⁸²

Immediately prior to the Constitutional Assembly, black activists established the Coordinator of Black Communities (later, Organization of Black Communities), which advocated the type of rights for which the Indian organizations were lobbying. No black delegate was elected to the Assembly, due to a lack of financing, a split vote, and the "weak politicization of blackness in general." While both indigenous delegates elected had black advisors, blacks complained that the Indians ignored their alliance once the negotiations began and restricted their proposals to Indian issues, denying the status of blacks as an ethnic group.⁸³ According to Carlos Rosero, a member of the Special Commission of Black Communities negotiating the implementation of the constitutional reform, black communities lack the strong and enduring organizations of indigenous communities; those that exist tend to be coopted by traditional political forces. This is the result of a history of unity among black communities based on isolation from the larger society which declined following the penetration of the state and economy in the Pacific Coast riverine region in the 1980s.⁸⁴

The 1991 Constitution gave lesser (though significant) recognition of black culture and collective rights. The collective

property rights of traditional black communities occupying state lands in the Pacific region, or those similarly situated, were recognized, discrimination outlawed, and a presidential advisory board for blacks established. The law implementing the land rights legislation, promulgated in August 1993, also provided for two seats in the lower chamber for the traditional black communities. Following the signing of the constitution, blacks angry with the lesser deal they received relative to the radical gains by the Indians participated in a wave of black protest, commencing with sit-ins in the Chocó.⁸⁵

International Actors and Events

In September 4-6, 1992, the Continental Campaign, "500 years of Indigenous, Black and Popular Resistance," met in Bogotá and issued a manifesto to the Colombian people, calling on supporters throughout the country to demonstrate against the planned official quinqucentenary celebrations.⁸⁶ In October of 1992, tens of thousands of Indians in the Cauca staged a massive march to Popayán. On October 9, public forces evicted 10,000 protestors from a section of the Pan-American highway near Río Blanco, where transportation had been paralyzed by the march for 3 days.⁸⁷

The most important international supporters are the human rights organizations who monitor and publicize the abysmal human rights situation in Colombia, and the development foundations of foreign governments (e.g., Canada, Sweden, the United States), which have supported economic development or leadership and human rights training by Colombian indigenous organizations. Environmental organizations have perhaps been their least influential in Colombia, where the heart of the Indian movement is in the highlands, and where the local political culture and level of acculturation of indigenous leaders has provided the movement sufficient resources to stand on its own. While blacks have derived inspiration from ideas and events in the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean, they have achieved virtually no direct financial support and have few contacts with blacks in the Spanish-speaking world. Recently a series of international conferences and exchange visits sponsored by the Chicago-based Organization of Africans in the Americas has attempted to create stronger links among isolated black communities, but their efforts affect a tiny minority and they

have had no impact on the capacity of blacks to mobilize themselves at the local or national level.

In the beginning, private foundations and national NGOs made an important organizational and resource contribution to the Indian movement. According to Jesús Avirama, the goals of those organizations have since diverged from those of the indigenous movement, particularly with respect to environmental organizations, which fail to take into account the development needs of indigenous communities and focus on the Amazon or Pacific Coast, ignoring Indians in less ecologically interesting areas. In addition, indigenous leaders resent the behavior of some non-Indian activists who present themselves to outsiders as the Indians' representatives and who become involved in divisive internal squabbles.⁸⁸ Thus, currently, national NGOs are not very important to the political vitality of the Colombian indigenous movement.⁸⁹

CONCLUSION

In both Brazil and Colombia, democratization and the active political engagement of organizations were at different times both independent and dependent variables. The democratization process was a major impetus to the political organization of ethnic groups, which were able to secure unprecedented rights and autonomy under new constitutions. At the same time, the vibrant ethnic organizations that emerged in the 1970s to protect land rights participated in the 1980s to enrich the plurality of voices opposed to the status quo, helping to enlarge the political rights and informal participation of excluded groups. The idea of the oppressed but undaunted and visually exciting Indian captured the national imagination and helped to reshape national identity as both countries were swept up in the energy of dramatic political change.⁹⁰

In both countries the most important catalysts to the creation of indigenous organizations and the consolidation of a unified national political movement were attacks by national elites on indigenous land tenure rights—either through forced invasion of Indian territory or proposals to change protective laws; and the opportunity to codify new indigenous rights in national laws and constitutions. In Colombia, participation in the first elections following the

constitutional reform inspired indigenous political activity, but interest in electoral participation dropped precipitously in the next elections. In Brazil, constant efforts by elites since the 1988 constitutional reform to roll back indigenous rights and prevent the implementation of land demarcation is the main focus of activity among indigenous communities and their supporters.

The timing of the emergence of indigenous groups does not support the theory that indigenous political activity was motivated by dissatisfaction with citizenship rights. In its formative stages, the CRIC rejected an approach that emphasized citizenship rights in favor of a strategy stressing the recuperation of the communal land rights enshrined in Law 89 of 1890 (still in effect)—despite the fact that this law equated Indian civil rights to that of minors and included other demeaning language.⁹¹ As Marta Teresa Findji explains with regard to the Indigenous Authorities Movement in southwest Colombia, the protagonist of indigenous movements is not the citizen, but the community:

At the core of the Indigenous Authorities Movement's struggle is the defense of the concept of community as a guiding cultural model and an alternative to the citizen—the plain, dispossessed individual of the large, crowded cities, who is invited to 'participate' in a power actually held by others.⁹²

In short, indigenous peoples do not seek merely the creation of pluralist government institutions but, rather, seek the transformation of the state and society into a pluricultural democratic model, based on collective and communal rights and incorporating spheres of ethnic autonomy. Thus, the correlation between the democratic transition and the rise of ethnic organizing must be analyzed with care.

In Brazil, the indigenous movement, though clearly led by indigenous leaders and communities themselves, was profoundly dependent on national human rights organizations and international environmental NGOs in the face of a juggernaut of conservative opposition to indigenous land rights. The relationship between Colombian Indians and international actors has been less important than in Brazil. The heart of the Colombian indigenous movement is in the Cauca valley, an area of lesser interest to northern environmental groups. The Cauca provided a superb leadership

base, blending a history of autonomous Indian *cabildo* government over a significant land base, with a history of acculturation among a sector of the Indian population with the education and political sophistication to form a collaborative partnership with—rather than a dependency on—national nonindigenous actors. While in Brazil international pressure has been crucial to prodding the national government to codify and uphold indigenous constitutional rights, in Colombia, international pressure had a negligible impact on the political gains made by indigenous organizations.

International events were important to mobilizing and sustaining the energies of indigenous communities in both countries, but different events were crucial for each. The 1992 UNCED conference was the most important for Brazilian Indians, being located in Brazil and stressing the relationship between indigenous rights and protection of the environment. In Colombia, the 500 Years of Resistance Campaign was most influential in creating a positive image of indigenous people and culture in indigenous communities, in the media, and in society at large. Both national movements have gained sustenance from multiple contacts with their counterparts in neighboring countries, with the Colombian Indians better able to take advantage of such opportunities for networking, because of their speaking of Spanish (as opposed to Portuguese or an autochthonous language), and their proximity to vibrant movements in Ecuador and Panama, and the cheaper and more direct air and bus travel possible from Bogotá.

It is impossible to conclude from this study the relative impact of *external* versus *internal* variables on the success of indigenous politics. It can be assumed, however, that the intensity and breadth of indigenous ethnic identity among the native population of Colombia and Brazil was instrumental in the survival of this population as a distinct cultural group for centuries under the most adverse conditions. The impact of identity can be demonstrated in part by looking at the lesser achievements of much larger black populations in Brazil and Colombia, who were less able to take advantage of the democratic opening or to forge inter-American networks of solidarity. Explanations for the failure of black organizations to form and thrive under similar conditions of repression, forced assimilation, and economic, social, and political marginalization, generally highlight problems in the black community in these countries. Scholars cite the difficulty of

defining or identifying an extremely heterogeneous population that is not accustomed to perceiving itself in ethnic or racial terms, the sheer multiplicity of terms describing varying shades of blackness and brownness, and state and elite policies that enforce a notion of racial democracy or a national image of a singular mixed-race ideal.

Another factor that may be important in explaining differences between black and Indian political action is the differential legal status between the two populations. Some abolition blacks have had no special legal status or state programs created for their protection or benefit. On the other hand, Indians in Brazil and Colombia and the majority of Western Hemisphere countries have, since the conquest, had their ethnicity institutionalized formally in a series of colonial-era decrees, special constitutional articles, and government agencies. While much of this legal detritus is archaic and demeaning, the precedent it set of special status for Indians provided the foundation of indigenous political strategy.

NOTES

1. Collections on contemporary indigenous politics include Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *Utopía y revolución: El pensamiento político contemporáneo de los indios de América Latina* (Mexico: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1981); Francoise Morin, *Indianidad, Etnocidio, Indigenismo en América Latina* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, Centre D'études Mexicaines et Centaméricaines, 1988); Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer, eds., *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Donna Lee Van Cott, ed., *Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994). On indigenous social movements, see Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds., *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

2. Alison Brysk and Carol Wise, "Economic Adjustment and Ethnic Conflict in Bolivia, Mexico and Peru," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois, 21-15 February 1995; Deborah J. Yashar, "Ethnicity and Democracy in Latin America," paper presented at the Inter-American Dialogue conference on Democratic Governance, Washington, DC, 12-13 December, 1995.

3. Yashar.

4. Remo Guidieri and Francesco Pellizzi, "Smoking Mirrors—Modern Polity and Ethnicity," in *Ethnicities and Nations: Processes of Interethnic Relations in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific*, eds. Pellizzi Guidieri and Stanley J. Tambiah (Austin: Rothko Chapel/University of Texas Press), 23.

5. Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1975), 142-146.

6. Guidieri and Pellizzi, 25.

7. Peter Wade, "The Cultural Politics of Blackness in Colombia," paper delivered at the XVIII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, March 1994, 3; Howard Winant, "Rethinking Race in Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (February, 1992): 189; Michael L. Conniff and Thomas J. Davis, *Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 304.

8. On alliances among Indians and environmentalists see Alison Brysk, "Acting Globally: Indian Rights and International Politics in Latin America," in Van Cott, *Indigenous Peoples*, 29-54; Juan de Onis, *The Green Cathedral: sustainable Development in Amazonia* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1992); Andrew Revkin, *The Burning Season* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990); Beth A. Conklin and Laura Graham, "Forging a Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics," manuscript, 1994; and Stuart J. Hudson, *Culture and Conservation: The Alliance Between the Indigenous People of the Amazon Basin and Environmental Organizations in North America* (Washington, DC: National Wildlife Federation, 1990). On cooperation between international NGOs and Indians during the UNCED conference, see Yolande Kakabadse N. with Sarah Burns, "Movers and Shapers: NGOs in International Affairs," Washington DC: World Resources Institute working paper, May, 1994.

9. The Campaign was officially launched at an international meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1989, which was followed by meetings in Sao Paulo and Quito (1990); Bogotá, Xoxocotla, Mexico, and Guatemala (1991), and a final "Encounter" in Managua, Nicaragua, in October of 1992.

10. John Gabriel, "Initiating a Movement: Indigenous, Black, and Grassroots Struggles in the Americas," *Race and Class* 35(1994): 10-12, 16; 500 Years of Resistance Campaign, Operative Secretariat, *Memorias: Encuentro latinoamericano de organizaciones campesinas e indígenas*, Bogotá, Colombia, 7-12 October 1989.

11. This can also be attributed to the regular meetings of the United Nations Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, which have met yearly in Geneva since 1982 to draft an international instrument to articulate and protect indigenous rights (submitted to the Subcommission on Discrimination in 1993). Examples of the "indigenous agenda" can be found in Bonfil Batalla, 1981 and in Indian-published international magazines like *Abya Yala News*, published by SAIIC, and *Native Americas*,

published by Cornell University's American Indian Program.

12. John Gabriel notes that the expansion of the Campaign to include blacks and popular organizations was justified in three ways: 1) blacks brought forcibly to the Americas shared with Indians suffering due to western colonialism; 2) blacks and indigenous peoples were working on similar issues in community or trade union organizations; and 3) blacks, indigenous peoples, and the poor shared a history of domination, as well as a current fight to counter what Campaign leaders termed the "re-conquest of Latin America" by North American and European states and international countries, through the creation of new dependent relations based on development aid and free trade agreements. In addition, blacks and Indians shared problems of racism and discrimination that presented similar problems and questions of identity for emerging self-identified ethnic organizations. Gabriel, 10-12, 16.

13. Gabriel, 10-12, 16; Bice Maiguishca, "The Role of Ideas in a Changing World Order: The International Indigenous Movement, 1975-1990," Occasional Paper No. 4, Toronto: York University, 1992.

14. Blacks were 10 percent of the population following emancipation in 1888. According to the 1991 census, 5 percent of the population is black and 39 percent "pardo," or mixed race. Most reference works cite a figure of 50 percent for the combined population of African heritage. Blacks are most numerous in the northeast and in urban slums. The state of Bahia, the cradle of Afro-Brazilian culture, is 90 percent black. Don Podesta, "Black Slums Belie Brazil's Self-Image," *Washington Post*, 17 August 1993. Sympathizers with the black movement assert numbers as high as 70 percent. According to Conniff and Davis, Brazil's population is 1/3 black and 1/3 mulatto (Conniff and Davis, 270).

15. The most numerous ethnic groups are the Guarani (est. 30,000), the Tikuna (est. 23,000), the Yanomami (est. 9,000), Makuxi (est. 9,000), and the Kayapo (est. 4,000), while 77 percent of the indigenous population belong to ethnic groups of fewer than 1,000 individuals. Julia Preston, "Trial Spurs Debate on Brazil's Indians. Cultural Identity, Legal Statue at Issue in Kaiapo Couple Rape Case," *Washington Post*, 17 August 1992, A1, A10; Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Ana Valéria N. Araújo Leitao, "Establishing the Rule of Law for the Indian Peoples of Brazil," statement before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, 14 July 1993, 1.

16. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Stephan Schwartzman, statement before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, 14 July 1993.

17. Congress, House, Araújo Leitao.

18. "Demarcation of Indian lands threatened by politics in Brazil," *Amanaka's Amazon Network Newsletter*, Update #1, September 1993, 1-2; "Second Thoughts About the Yanomami. Pressure on the Biggest Reservation is Growing," *Latin American Regional Reports—Brazil*, 15 February 1995, 7.

19. Jan Knippers Black, "Brazil's Limited Redemocratization," *Current History* (February 1992): 88; Congress, House, Araújo Leitao, 1.

20. On the impact on Indians of development and colonization of the Amazon, see Bruce Albert, "Yanomami-Kaingang: La cuestión de las tierras indígenas en Brasil," in *Indianidad, etnocidio, indigenismo, en América Latina*, ed. Francoise Morin (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, Centre D'études Mexicaines et Centroaméricaines, 1988), 202.

21. Black, 88-89.

22. Ibid.

23. Patrick Menget, "Reflexiones sobre el derecho y la existencia de las comunidades indígenas en Brasil," in Morin, 183-195; Albert, 211.

24. Also in 1978, a Washington NGO, the Indian Law Resource Center, began to press a complaint on behalf of the Yanomami before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Commission eventually ruled in favor of the Yanomami, although the Brazilian government ignored its request for an on-site investigation until June of 1995 (Menget, 193).

25. Congress, House, Araújo Leitao, 2.

26. The UNI ceased to function in 1993. Carlos Frederico Marés de Souza, Jr., "Brazil's Outrage Intensifies as toll in Massacres Hits 73," in Van Cott, 221.

27. Jackson Diehl, "Indian Makes Presence Felt in Brazil's Congress," *Washington Post*, 24 November 1983.

28. Beth A. Conklin and Laura Graham, "Forging a Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics," manuscript, 1994, 16.

29. Marés de Souza, Jr., 227.

30. David Maybury Lewis, "Brazil's Significant Minority," *Wilson Quarterly* (Summer, 1990): 40.

31. Congress, House, Araújo Leitao, 2.

32. James Brooke, "Brazil Seeks to Return Ancestral Lands to Descendants of Runaway Slaves," *New York Times*, 15 August 1993, A12; Glen Switkes, "Traditional Black Amazon Community Fights for Recognition of Land Rights," internet transmission, 1995.

33. Marés de Souza, Jr., 227.

34. Conklin and Graham, 16.

35. Congress, House, Araújo Leitao, 3.

36. Black, 89. Four thousand Kayapó live in a 25.3 million acre reservation, whose demarcation was largely paid for by the Rainforest Foundation, an NGO founded in 1988 by rock musician Sting and Kayapó chief Raoni.

37. Emilienne Ireland, "Neither Warriors nor Victims, the Wauja Peacefully Organize to Defend their Land," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 15 (1991): 56-57.

38. Marés de Souza, Jr., 230.

39. Menget, 190.

40. "Row Over Indian Land Demarcation: Cardoso Lobbied to Rule in Favor of Private Interests," *Latin American Regional Reports—Brazil* (13 July 1995): 6-7; "Brazilian Senate Wishes to Review the Demarcation of Indian Lands" (Brasilia: Indianist Missionary Council, 22 December 1994).

41. Prior to the democratic opening in the 1970s, significant black organizations had formed in Brazil in the 1920s-1930s, typified by the Brazilian Negro Front. These were among the first repressed under the Getúlio Vargas coup of 1937. Another brief period of black protest occurred after World War II, which was suppressed by the military dictatorship in the 1960s. Conniff and Davis, 246-247, 288; Thomas E. Skidmore, "Fact and Myth: Discovering a Racial Problem in Brazil," *Working Paper 173* (1992): 6.

42. Winant, 185.

43. Winant, 185-188; Conniff and Davis, 290.

44. Howard Winant, "The Fact of Blackness in Brazil," a paper presented at the XVII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Los Angeles, CA, September 1992, 1; Skidmore, 6.

45. Black, 84.

46. Marés de Souza, Jr., 229.

47. Conklin and Graham, 32-34.

48. Winant, "Rethinking Race in Brazil." 173.

49. Skidmore, 14.

50. James Brooke, "Uniao dos Palmares Journal: From Brazil's Misty Past, a Black Hero Emerges," *New York Times*, 30 November 1994, A4).

51. The majority of the black population, descended from slaves liberated in 1851, lives on the Pacific Coast, where they are 80-90 percent of the population, with others concentrated on the Caribbean coast and in port cities. Colombia was the first country to officially end slavery, a condition of Haiti's assistance to Simon Bolivar. James Brooke, "Long Neglected, Colombia's Blacks Win Changes," *New York Times*, 29 March 1994; Conniff and Davis, 283.

52. Jesús Avirama and Rayda Márquez, "The Indigenous Movement in Colombia," in Van Cott, 84; Harvey Kline, "Colombia: Building Democracy in the Midst of Violence and Drugs," paper prepared for the Inter-American Dialogue Conference on Democratic Governance, Washington, DC, 11-12 December 1994, 25.

53. Kline, 34-35.

54. Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca, *Como Nos Organizamos*, Cartilla del CRIC No. 2, 1980.

55. Christian Gros, "Una organización indígena en lucha por la tierra: El Consejo Regional indígena del Cauca," in Morin, 238.

56. María Teresa Findji, "From Resistance to Social Movement: The Indigenous Authorities Movement in Colombia," in Escobar and Alvarez, 115-116.

57. On the origins and early achievements of the CRIC, one of the first and most successful of the contemporary wave of Indian organizations, see Christian Gros, "Una organización indígena en lucha por la tierra: El Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca," in Francoise Morin, ed., *Indianidad, Etnocidio, Indigenismo en América Latina* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, Centre D'études Mexicaines et Centraméricaines, 1988); and Christian Gros, *Colombia Indígena: Identidad cultural y cambio social* (Bogotá: CEREC, 1991). For an account written from the perspective of one of the leaders of the CRIC, see Avirama and Márquez.

58. Gros, "Una organización indígena," 241-253.

59. Findji, 119-222.

60. Ibid., 114.

61. Christian Gros, *Colombia indígena: identidad cultural y cambio social*, 222, 227.

62. Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca (CRIC), *Encuentro Indígena Nacional* (Lomas de Hilarco, Tolima: CRIC, 1980).

63. Avirama and Márquez, 86.

64. Ibid., 87.

65. Leslie Wirpsa, "Taking Responsibility. In Colombia, electoral politics and grassroots activism complement one another," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Fall, 1992): 52; Avirama and Márquez, 87.

66. Gros, "Una organización indígena," 235, 252.

67. Avirama and Márquez.

68. Gros, "Una organización indígena," 251.

69. While indigenous leaders from the CRIC, with whom the group is associated, say that the purpose was self-defense, Findji contends that the Indian guerrillas had the same political motivations as the country's other armed groups, and alleges that the Quintín Lame may have been responsible for the assassination of rival AICO leaders. Findji, 128.

70. Wade.

71. The success of the mayoral elections was marred by a wave of violence and intimidation against the new leftist party Patriotic Union (UP) in which 20 of 87 mayoral candidates were murdered in the six months prior to the election. John D. Martz, "Democratization and National Development in Colombia," *Latin American Research Review* 27 (3, 1992): 217-219.

72. "Why we Abandoned our Guns. Quintín Lame Speaks," *SAIIC Newsletter* 6, nos. 1 and 2 (1992): 10, reprinted from *Unidad Indígena* 99 (the magazine of ONIC): May 1991.

73. Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca (CRIC), "Cabildo indígenas en la constituyente," *Unidad Alvaro Ulcúe* (1991): 5.

74. It has been difficult to implement the territorial provisions, however, as secondary legislative procedures are required to distribute territorial entities and define their responsibilities. Indigenous organizations opposed the versions of the Organic Law the Gaviria and Samper administrations presented and are dissatisfied with the lack of input the organizations have been able to have in the creation of the implementing legislation. Ana Cecilia Betancourt and Hernán Rodríguez, "After the Constitution: Indigenous Proposals for Territorial Demarcation in Colombia," *Abya Yala News* 8, nos. 1 and 2 (Summer 1994): 22-23. On the constitutional reform, see Departamento Nacional de Planeación, Gobierno de Colombia, *Bases para la conformación de las Entidades Territoriales Indígenas* (Bogotá: 1992).

75. Avirama and Márquez, 85.

76. Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca (CRIC), "Elecciones y movimientos cívicos," *Unidad Alvaro Ulcúe* (September, 1991): 4.

77. Alfonso Palma Capera and Oskar Benjamin Gutiérrez, "Special Indian Districting: Unresolved Political Problems in Colombia," *Abya Yala News* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 14-15.

78. Wirpsa, 50.

79. Palma, Capera and Gutiérrez, 14.

80. Kline, 24; Palma Capera and Gutiérrez, 14.

81. Wade, 3-6.

82. Wade, 3-9.

83. Wade, 10-11.

84. Black communities tend to identify strongly with particular rivers and the communities associated therewith, but not with those from different regions. Black political organizations are limited to tiny groups with little interconnection or political impact, who are over "intellectualized", and work on behalf of the communities rather than *with* them. Rosero calls on black communities to emulate the achievements of indigenous groups: 1) their strong organizational structure within and among communities; 2)

their elaboration of a common theoretical vision; and 3) the development of tactics that maximize the potential of the work of the community. Carlos Rosero, "El Pacífico: Frontera Cultural," *Autodescubrimiento de Nuestra América. Camino de Identidad*. Boletín Informativo, n.d.

85. Brooke, "Long Neglected, Colombia's Blacks Win Changes."

86. Campaña Continental 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena, Negra Y Popular, "Manifiesto al Pueblo Colombiano," 6 September 1992, Bogotá.

87. According to reports on Bogotá television, altercations with the police resulted in injuries to 4 soldiers, 7 police and 15 civilians. According to former CRIC president Marcos Avirama, who participated in the demonstration, the peaceful march was violently broken up by police, resulting in 26 Indians shot and 68 arrested. "Indians, Peasants Evicted from Pan-American Highway," from Bogotá Inravisión Television Cadena 1, 9 Oct. 1992, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, FBIS-LAT-92-198, 13 Oct. 1992; personal communication with Marcos Avirama, 26 Oct. 1992. On the views of Colombian Indians and blacks on the quincentenary, see the commemorative magazine, *Autodescubrimiento de nuestra América: Caminos de identidad*. Boletín informativo de la Campaña Autodescubrimiento de Nuestra América, n.d.

88. Avirama and Márquez, 83-106.

89. National NGOs working with indigenous communities are helpful in other ways, in particular in supporting economic cooperatives. The CECOIN, established in 1985 by former officials of the government's indigenous agency, has been instrumental in channeling national and international economic resources for community development. Many of the national NGOs work in cooperation with the congressionally funded U.S.-based Inter-American Foundation. On the role of NGOs in social movements in Colombia, see Marion Ritchey-Vance, *The Art of Association: NGOs and Civil Society in Colombia* (Rosslyn, VA: Inter-American Foundation, 1991).

90. Conklin and Graham, 35.

91. Gros, "Una organización indígena"; Avirama and Márquez.

92. Findji, 130-131.

3.

A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE: The Mexican Indigenous Movement and the Zapatista Rebellion

Since the startling emergence of an armed insurgency in southern Mexico in January of 1994, much ink has been spilled attempting to explain the roots of this rebellion, the implications of its emergence during a time of slow democratization and rapid economic modernization, and the likelihood that such a movement could emerge in a similar context. Most analysis has focused on the relationship between the rebellion and economic adjustment in Mexico and, in particular, on the modernization of agriculture. Other analysts have tied the rebellion to the glacial pace of Mexico's democratic opening, which the rebellion in Chiapas has accelerated immensely.¹

Easy explanations have been confounded by the complexity and mutability of the demands of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). Is it social movement? A revolutionary socialist movement? An Indian movement? While all these tendencies are present, it is the significant participation in the leadership and ranks of the EZLN by Mayan Indians, and the qualified support of the country's established nonviolent indigenous movement, that distinguishes the Chiapas rebellion from other revolutionary movements in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, the presence of nonindigenous forms of organization and political rhetoric distinguishes the EZLN from other Indian movements in the Americas.

The indigenous movement advances a distinct political agenda that envisions a comprehensive reform of the Mexican Constitution that would redefine the relationship between the state and indigenous nationalities. It is imbued with the ideology of

indianismo, a continental intellectual movement that crystallized in the 1970s as a result of an intense dialogue among anthropologists and Indian leaders in the Americas. *Indianismo* emphasizes the cultural values of Indian civilization—not to sustain or reconstruct pre-Columbian models—but to differentiate Indian culture from that of the national societies of Latin America. Since the mid-1970s, it has emphasized self-determination, autonomy, the rights of nations in international law, respect for traditional authorities and customary law, and community-directed economic development.² While *indianismo* is a continentwide movement, the goal of the protagonists of the movement—the thousands of indigenous communities and organizations throughout the Americas—is the recuperation of local autonomy and the exercise of authority over traditional territories. *Indianismo* is an explicit rejection of *indigenismo*, the prevailing state policy since the 1940s, which seeks to “improve” Indians through assimilation into the dominant culture. It also explicitly confronts revolutionary Marxism, which denies the salience of culture as the defining motif of the Indian-state struggle, emphasizing instead the class solidarity of all subaltern groups.

The EZLN is representative of the Marxist school. While its revolutionary project is rooted in the injustices suffered by the indigenous population of eastern Chiapas, the EZLN calls for the reorientation of Mexican economic policy along traditional socialist lines and the transfer of political power from elites to the mass of poor Mexicans. This essay will compare these two contemporary political forces and trace the relationship between them from the emergence of the clandestine armed movement in the early 1980s to the present time.

This essay distinguishes the formation of the organized nonviolent Mexican indigenous movement from the Chiapas insurgency, showing how the two forces came together for their mutual benefit after the spectacular ascendance of the Zapatista movement in 1994 and how both movements were ultimately eclipsed by the financial and political crisis gripping Mexico after the collapse of the peso in December 1994. The distinction between the Zapatista and the Mexican indigenous movement is important for two reasons. First, as peace talks limped along in summer 1995, the EZLN was in a position to negotiate Indian demands on behalf of the Indians of Mexico. Second, the distinctions to be drawn

between the goals and organizational strategies of the indigenous movement and the EZLN will contribute to our evolving understanding of the roots and implications of the Chiapas uprising and the likelihood of a similar movement emerging in other Latin American countries, where indigenous movements have been actively confronting national and local authorities since the late 1970s.³

The dialogue between the EZLN and the Mexican Indian movement reflects a larger debate between the armed and legal left and the indigenous movement in Latin America and, within the indigenous movement itself, between those aligned with popular organizations, unions, and the poor and those who prefer to keep some organizational and ideological distance between the Indian movement and its potential allies. This debate is particularly contentious in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru, where Indian organizations have struggled to maintain their independence from militant unions and often predatory armed movements.

ORIGINS OF THE INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT

There are 56 major Amerindian ethnic groups in Mexico, widely dispersed throughout the country, with the highest concentrations in the central and southern states and in mountainous and forested regions. These regions correspond to those areas with the least economic development, access to social services, and communication and transportation links with the rest of the country. According to the Mexican government, 75 percent of Mexicans living in extreme poverty are indigenous, while the World Bank confirms that poverty in Mexico is closely correlated to the concentration of indigenous population in a given municipality.⁴ In absolute terms, Mexico's is the largest indigenous population in Latin America, making up between 10 and 20 percent of the country's population.⁵

Since before the Conquest, indigenous communities have maintained political and social structures whose responsibility it is to administer justice and regulate production, social rituals, and religious festivals. The descendants of these traditional forms of organization today comprise the building blocks of the vast majority of indigenous organizations in Mexico and throughout the

region; they have endured under strong challenges from rival forms of authority. Following the Mexican revolution, the Mexican state declared ethnic organizations to be illegal. Indians wishing to organize themselves politically were obliged to identify themselves as "*campesinos*" (peasants) and to form groups based on occupations or geographical regions. When Indians have organized outside of internal community purposes, most often it has been to defend or reclaim ancestral land. By the 1930s, the Mexican Government had set up an organizational structure within the ruling party—the Party of the Mexican Revolution (later changed to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI,—to incorporate both the burgeoning peasant and agrarian movements and the isolated cultural organizations into a party structure that would rule Mexico into the 1990s. The dominant policy objective of the government toward Indians was their assimilation into modernizing Mexican society. State-sponsored indigenous organizations were founded in order to channel and control the potentially radical Indian agenda. A myth of *mestizaje*—or the mixing of the races—was explicitly propagated to psychologically unify Mexicans into one "cosmic race" of European and Indian heritage.

The relationship between indigenous farmers and the state changed radically in the 1980s. Because of the economic crisis following Mexico's 1982 declaration that it could not pay its foreign debt, the government began a period of fiscal austerity that resulted in the curtailment of public works projects, health and education services, and programs to subsidize increasingly unprofitable agriculture. The rural poor suffered the most, although it is important to remember that in the most remote and heavily indigenous areas, these benefits had never reached indigenous communities. At the same time, the discovery of oil and the emergence of alternative industries reduced the importance of agriculture to the Mexican economy leading many to leave the agricultural sector. This caused a surplus of off-farm day labor (exacerbated in Chiapas by the arrival of tens of thousands of Guatemalan refugees), while a decline in international agricultural prices made less efficient rain-fed plots unviable. Indians were unable to find occasional labor to supplement declining *ejido*⁶ (communally owned land) incomes. Thus, as Collier explains, the indigenous farmer was converted from an important partner in the national economy to a burden on it. Taking office in 1988, the

Salinas administration continued as a matter of policy the removal of the agrarian safety net that had begun as a requirement of austerity. It set out to dismantle peasant agricultural supports and rewrite the constitutional relationship between peasants and the state. The impact of the combination of changes in the international economy and the Mexican agricultural reform on *campesinos* was devastating, particularly for coffee growers in Chiapas.⁷

In 1988 many indigenous organizations allied with the Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas campaign, which brought together parties on the left with disgruntled former leaders of the PRI. That campaign marked a change in the political loyalties of indigenous voters, who, prior to 1988, had been securely held by rural PRI bosses through coercion, patronage, or lack of alternatives. The new political coalition united behind Cárdenas, the National Democratic Front (FDN), attracted many rank-and-file Indian supporters, as well as indigenous leaders, who ran on the FDN slate. According to leaders from such diverse Indian tribes as the Seri in the northern state of Sonora and the Mixtec in the southern state of Oaxaca, Cárdenas won the majority of the Indian vote. Through massive fraud, however, the PRI claimed these votes—an act which radicalized the newly independent indigenous voters. Electoral fraud in 1988 was carried out most brazenly in the rural south where Cárdenas had picked up support.⁸

Though the Cárdenas candidacy offered little explicitly to Indians, the symbolism of Cárdenas, whose Aztec name and features evoked an indigenous heritage and whose father Lázaro had distributed land to the poor, gained him a lot of support, which accrued to the FDN's successor, the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) after his failed candidacy. Following the show of independence in 1988, many indigenous communities that had supported Cárdenas suffered reprisals, particularly in the form of cancelled public works and economic development projects. While this convinced some to stick with the PRI, it radicalized others, who flocked to the prodemocracy civic movements and ethnic organizations that formed around this time. Organizing to counter state-sponsored celebrations of the "discovery" of the Americas, which began in earnest in 1989, was one of the most important catalysts to indigenous mobilization in the hemisphere, and this was also the case in Mexico. Not only did the quincentenary mobilizations politicize Indians, it raised awareness of indigenous

communities among other sectors of society and engendered sympathy for their problems. This change in attitude toward Indians in Mexico made possible the widespread sympathy later expressed for the EZLN.⁹

In the early 1990s, indigenous activists protested the official end of agrarian reform and the modernization of agriculture by the Salinas administration. Indian communities protested changes in the Mexican Constitution's Article 27 that weakened the inalienable communal landholding rights of Indian communities, which went into effect in January 1992.¹⁰ Most independent indigenous organizations view the threats to communal property posed by Article 27 as having profound negative implications for the economic, social, and political organization of indigenous communities. As one Indian leader explained,

In the end it is the weapon that will destroy our people; because it is a way of dividing us into pieces, families or individuals, because the lands will be privatized. In the *ejidos* everyone will have their parcel, with title to their property, and the collective life of the community will be destroyed.¹¹

The diversity of indigenous organizations cannot be overstated. They range from community-based groups, the most common, to federations of one nationality or conglomerations of several nationalities in a particular region. The groups can be loosely divided into explicitly *indianista* organizations—which tend to emphasize the protection of indigenous culture, the use of Indian languages, bilingual education, respect for indigenous medicine, religion, and traditional authorities—and the *campesino* organizations—which tend to be more closely allied with the established left and popular organizations, and whose demands are more explicitly economic. Yet, despite the diversity of languages and customs among the Indians of Mexico and geographical barriers, an indigenous movement has emerged in the last decades that is capable of united action in particular moments, and that shares a desire for greater autonomy, more secure access to land and economic resources, relief from discrimination and violence, and respect for the dignity of the country's diverse indigenous cultures. The *indianista* and *campesino* organizations share a pan-Indian nationalism—a shared identification and solidarity—that is not just

a political tactic but the expression of a unity based in a common civilization, reinforced by centuries of domination and discrimination, and bound in a shared vision of a future wherein Indian nationalities are recognized as legitimate units of a "pluri-national" Mexican state. The realization of this vision is considered to be the "indispensable condition for the continuity and autonomous development of the distinct culture of each ethnic group," a process that was interrupted by European colonization.¹²

THE *CAMPESINO* MOVEMENT IN CHIAPAS

Before the 1970s, the *campesino* movement in Chiapas was nonexistent, save for some localized struggles for land, because of the isolation and dispersion of the mostly rural indigenous population. Chiapas is a state of extreme inequality and contradictions. The state's population is the second most indigenous and the poorest in terms of income. It has the highest infant mortality and illiteracy rates, with indicators of poverty and social marginalization even higher in the eastern zones, which provide the base for the Zapatistas. It is also rich in natural resources and contains some of the country's largest ranches. Land distribution is highly concentrated. The state's 4 percent share of the national population accounts for 30 percent of the country's petitions for land—petitions that were shelved when the government officially ended agrarian reform in 1992.¹³

In 1974 Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristóbal de las Casas organized a state-sponsored conference commemorating the 500th anniversary of the birth of the city's namesake. Rather than absorbing and channeling through the government the demands of the *campesinos* as intended, the agenda of the conference was overtaken by the Indians themselves. As a result, the conferees linked formerly dispersed indigenous and *campesino* groups into increasingly larger and stronger indigenous and *campesino* organizations and *ejido* unions.¹⁴ The majority of the groups formed was *campesino* rather than Indian organizations, and united indigenous communities and poor non-Indians through shared grievances of poverty, political domination, economic exploitation and, particularly, the struggle for land. The land struggles became increasingly combative as landowners and the public and private security forces that backed them used force to break up marches,

assemblies, and community-organized seizures of lands—generally, land that had been awarded by legal decree but that local authorities had refused to turn over. By the late 1970s, local land movements were able to transcend their former isolation and improvisational nature and form a regional *campesino* movement composed of diverse but loosely linked organizations.

The *campesino* organizations stressed land redistribution and revocation of the recent changes in Article 27; cheap agricultural credits and other economic supports; social services, such as roads, health care, education, and housing; and protection of individual human rights. The smaller *indianista* movement, spearheaded by the Independent Front of Indian Peoples (FIPI), focused on constitutional recognition of the collective rights and autonomy of indigenous peoples and the creation of pluri-ethnic indigenous regions and special laws to guarantee the participation of indigenous leaders in all branches of the national and state government.¹⁵

Several national organizations whose members would form the base of the EZLN were formed in this period, all of them inspired by the legend of Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata. During the 1970s and 1980s they were the target of repression on the part of paramilitary groups hired by local ranchers as well as security forces in Chiapas.¹⁶ In 1977, a minority of the peasant and indigenous activists, frustrated by years of poor results and mounting systematic repression, decided to take up arms, while the majority rejected violent methods either on principle or because they considered armed action to be risky and ineffective. Those choosing to go the armed route migrated toward the radical movements in the Lacandón rainforest. These movements were led by nonindigenous Marxist and Maoist intellectuals from northern Mexico, who learned indigenous languages and organized local Indian groups around cooperative productive activities. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) was formed in 1983 in the Lacandón jungle, drawing cadres from these radical leftist movements, agrarian organizations, and new waves of colonists from the highlands.

The mostly Indian coffee-growing cooperatives that sprang up in the 1980s were also an important force in the Chiapas *campesino* movement, and the dire situation of the coffee growers in the early 1990s was a catalyst to the uprising, both in generating anger at the

government and in tying the *campesinos'* feeling of abandonment and powerlessness to the Salinas administration's free-trade policies. Coffee is the most important agricultural product of Chiapas, representing 46 percent of national production, 70 percent of which is cultivated by small growers. Throughout the 1980s, the growers cooperatives worked to decentralize the coffee export industry to reduce the control of the processing and export monopoly and increase the return to growers, and expand into these lucrative sectors. In 1989, however, international coffee prices fell to half their prior level. Because the Salinas administration had dismantled a system of agricultural supports that previously had sustained peasant growers during times of hardship, the coffee growers were left with mounting debts and few alternatives.¹⁷ As the main source of cash income for Indians in eastern Chiapas, the crisis experienced by the coffee-growers cooperatives and the insensitivity of the government to their pleas for assistance fueled political unrest and opposition to the Salinas administration.

As in other states, political unrest was channeled into support for the Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas presidential candidacy in 1988. The blatant fraud perpetrated by the PRI in Chiapas, where Cárdenas had garnered considerable support, galvanized support for the armed movements in the Lacandón, which could point with renewed credibility to the futility of electoral channels.¹⁸ In order to subdue the increasing opposition political activity that had surrounded the 1988 elections, in 1989 the Salinas administration beefed up the military presence in Chiapas. In addition, upon taking office in December of 1988, the PRI governor signed a decree altering the penal code to broaden his powers to stifle dissent and criminalizing the common modes of political protest of the *campesino* and indigenous movement—land invasions, organized demonstrations, and mass protest aimed at government authorities.¹⁹

BIRTH OF A NEW SOCIETY

Between 1960 and 1980, the population of the Lacandón rainforest exploded from 5,000 to 300,000, spurred by population growth, the exhaustion of traditional Indian lands in the highlands, and the colonization encouraged by the government to satisfy the need for land without upsetting the concentration of landownership in the state. A significant portion of this migration was composed of

Indians from the highlands of central Chiapas, where the development of the energy sector in the 1980s had sharpened disparities of wealth and political power within indigenous communities themselves and created a class of “outsiders” who could no longer eke out a living in their ancestral homes. Others were pushed off their lands or prevented from acquiring new land by the expansion of land-intensive cattle ranching and the decline in occasional farm labor that had supplemented meager *ejido* incomes.²⁰

EMERGENCE OF THE EZLN

Because there were few Indian communities in the rainforest prior to the migrations of the 1960s and 1970s (aside from the tiny Lacandona tribe), the organizations that emerged in the Lacandón tended not to use traditional forms of organization and expression of indigenous cultures. Rather, to reflect the ethnic heterogeneity of the local population, they emphasized their *campesino* identity and the common struggle for land. Many involved in the radical and armed movements were young people from Indian communities from other areas of Chiapas, who severed or loosened ties to ethnic and cultural communities.²¹ The EZLN's Lacandón-based movement attracted the youngest of the disaffected. Initially, the average age of the group was 16, which rose slowly to 22 at the time of the uprising.²²

The EZLN's rhetoric and tactics were influenced in its formative stage by revolutionary socialism. Only following the offensives of January 1994—as the EZLN came to depend on the physical and moral support of the indigenous communities as a buffer between them and the Mexican army—did the Zapatistas fully embrace the *indianista* agenda and tone down the passé rhetoric of socialist revolution.²³ This can be demonstrated by analyzing the content of the Zapatistas' official communiqués and the statements of combatants from before the uprising to the present date. Given the multi-ethnic nature of the rebels' constituency and the socialist ideology of its leaders, it would appear that the group originally strove to downplay the ethnic factor as both divisive and irrelevant. Then, the attention generated by the quincentenary mobilization in San Cristóbal, together with the extensive press coverage of the

ethnic component of the uprising immediately after it began, persuaded the EZLN to adopt the Indian banner more explicitly.

The EZLN's late discovery of cultural demands can be demonstrated by analyzing its own statements, beginning with the manifesto, "El Despertador Mexicano" (The Mexican Awakening), which was issued as a call to arms on December 1, 1993. This manifesto conveys the EZLN's plans for revolution and details rules and procedures for the establishment of a revolutionary government following the beginning of the uprising (which began one month later). Instructions are given for the collectivization of economic production, including land ownership, an explicit attack on the Salinas administration's reform of Article 27. While this language appeals also to Indians, who traditionally own land communally but work it in individual family plots, it is derived from socialist ideas of collective ownership of production. According to "El Despertador Mexicano," the revolution is begun on behalf of "all the poor, exploited and miserable of Mexico," though explicit reference is made to *campesinos* and agricultural workers.

Nowhere in this document is mention made of Indian culture or the Maya Indians of Chiapas. While the EZLN notes plans to establish health centers with modern facilities, it does not mention protection for traditional medicine; schools are promised, but no mention made of bilingual education or the languages of the local population, 25 percent of whom do not speak Spanish. There is no mention of community autonomy, self-determination, cultural rights, identity, or language, the buzzwords of the contemporary indigenous movement. Moreover, cultural and ethnic symbols are lacking. A *mestizo* Mexican revolutionary hero is depicted on the front page, while photographs of masked, khaki-uniformed soldiers follow. Indigenous publications generally contain drawings of traditional symbols, words in indigenous languages, and photos or drawings depicting the visual manifestation of local culture. Finally, the document describes the organizational structure of the EZLN as hierarchical and centralized, as exemplified by an admonishment that only EZLN cadres and officials of the rank of major and above may negotiate with agents of the government without authorization from the General Command of the EZLN.²⁴ Indian organizations are generally decentralized, and hierarchies, when they exist, are de-emphasized.

As Eugenio Bermejillo notes, several weeks following the uprising the Zapatistas began to raise the Indian like a banner. Yet "indianness" is a highly ideological concept in the postuprising writings of the group's spokesperson—non-Indian Subcomandante Marcos—and is expressed in highly general, panethnic terms. According to Bermejillo, the Indian for the EZLN represents not ethnicity, but the negation of economic modernity. "More than socialism (the revolutionary idea more close at hand), it is the anti-modern character that is the ideological core of the movement." The Indian is the Zapatistas' explicit repudiation of the neoliberal economic project of the government. Rejection of this economic model, and its replacement with socialist, communal production, has been a key theme in all EZLN statements.²⁵

Following the uprising, the EZLN issued a series of communiques outlining its intentions. The first, a "Declaration of War," tied the EZLN's fight to that of Zapata and Pancho Villa and evoked other themes from the Mexican Revolution. The EZLN stated its intention of fighting all the way to the capital, defeating the army, and overthrowing the Mexican government. The only explicit references to ethnic issues in this communique are oblique references to "500 years of struggle" and to the "genocidal war" of the Mexican government, which are common Indian rhetorical themes. The communique is signed by the General Command of the EZLN, as was "El Despertador Mexicano."²⁶

Between the publication of this communique and the next, on January 6, there had been widespread media coverage of the uprising focusing speculation on its origins. Statements by Zapatista soldiers interviewed in the first days of the uprising, containing socialist slogans and extolling the superiority of communism over capitalism, led many to associate the uprising with the nearby Guatemalan rebels and Central American revolutionaries whose ideas had influenced political groups in the area in the last decade.²⁷ Based on this association, the Mexican Government and North American political analysts challenged the rebels' assertion that the uprising was led by Indians. This judgment was also based on the evident hierarchy among unmasked Indians without uniforms carrying fake guns, and the uniformed and ski-masked leadership that met with the press, some of whom were clearly non-Indian. In the January 6 communique the EZLN answered these charges, assuring the public that the majority of the

soldiers and 100 percent of the leadership were indigenous, and that the non-Indian spokespersons for the group were chosen because of their facility in Spanish, which was a second language to most of the combatants. For the first time, the communique is signed by the Revolutionary *Indigenous* Clandestine Committee, to which the General Command of the EZLN is now subordinate. Still, no special programs having to do with issues of culture or ethnic autonomy are mentioned.²⁸

Five more communiqués, dealing with a variety of topics, were delivered to the news media on January 13. In these, the EZLN further articulates its political agenda, clarifies its origins, and conveys its conditions for dialogue. No specific references are made to ethnic or cultural demands. Interestingly, a proposal is rejected that Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchú, the well-known Guatemalan Maya exile who resides in the area, serve as one of the mediators for the negotiations. Menchú was rejected because she is not Mexican, which is listed as one of the EZLN's criteria for mediators. No ethnic criteria are listed.

In late February, Subcomandante Marcos began to articulate the demands of the indigenous organizations that had rallied in support of the Zapatistas demands (but not their armed methods) in the weeks following the uprising. The Zapatistas had achieved broad legitimacy in the eyes of a majority of Mexican society based on the appalling living conditions of Chiapas Indians that media coverage of the conflict had exposed. In addition to the original demands for a reorientation of economic policy and the replacement of the current government with a government of transition, the EZLN leader began to echo the positions articulated by the leaders of the coalition of indigenous and peasant organizations that had formed immediately following the uprising, and called for "broad autonomy for Indian regions of the country" and self-government in areas where they predominate, noting the tradition of Indian self-government in Chiapas. He also proposed Indian "co-governors" to represent in the government each major ethnic group in Chiapas and throughout the country.²⁹ As will be discussed further below, while the theme of Indian autonomy and ethnic rights would never leave the rhetoric of the Zapatistas, they continue to present themselves as representatives of all the Mexican people, while the most comprehensive and far-reaching proposals for Indian rights are articulated by the national indigenous organizations themselves.

THE MARRIAGE IS CONSUMMATED

The presence of the military in Chiapas is due to its location along Mexico's southern border, the country's first line of defense against illegal immigration, as well as a regular stream of Guatemalan guerrillas and refugees, weapons, and drugs. Tensions between the military and indigenous communities in Chiapas were high in 1993 because of the army's increased harassment of indigenous communities in May and June of that year following the disappearance of two off-duty soldiers on May 20, 1993. The searches, beatings, and interrogations gained intensity after May 28, when the charred bodies of the soldiers were discovered, and the spike in reports of human rights violations attracted the attention of international human rights monitors.³⁰ Adding to the violence in the early 1990s was growing conflict between Catholic Indians, who tended to be allied with the traditional political bosses and the conservative clergy, and Protestant Indians, who tended to favor the political opposition and were allied with the left-leaning church people in Chiapas. The conflict led to the expulsion of hundreds of Protestant indigenous families from their Catholic communities; many eventually settled in the slums around San Cristóbal or in the Lacandón rainforest, where an estimated 40 percent of residents are members of Protestant or evangelical sects.³¹

Indian and peasant organizations without direct links to the Zapatistas took advantage of the notoriety the Zapatistas gained in various ways. Indian organizations issuing statements in support of the Indians of Chiapas expressed solidarity with the EZLN but overwhelmingly rejected their violent tactics, as this statement from Nahuatl leader Eustaquio Celestino of Guerrero suggests: "We support all their demands. We know firsthand about corruption and broken promises. But the solution is via dialogue, not arms."³² Nonviolent indigenous and *campesino* organizations in Chiapas forged a delicate political alliance in solidarity with the Zapatistas, while continuing to distance themselves from the insurgents' violent tactics. Two weeks following the uprising, approximately 140 such groups in Chiapas met to propose solutions to the conflict and voted to form an independent coordinating organization to represent their interests in the context of EZLN-government negotiations. In that moment of unity, the State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations (CEOIC) called for "a constitutional reform to enable

a new relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Mexican state" based on "the reorganization of territory as well as political restructuring," into "autonomous pluri-ethnic regions which would shift power from the state and the federation to Indigenous peoples."³³ In early February, indigenous and *campesino* organizations seized four town halls and demonstrated in over a dozen other communities to "demand the removal of corrupt local (PRI) authorities." On February 21, peace negotiations began in San Cristóbal, mediated by Bishop Samuel Ruiz. These ended on March 2 with a tentative peace plan based on the negotiations, which the EZLN representatives promised to discuss with their supporters. As these lengthy consultations proceeded in the following months, the land invasions accelerated. While 127 peasants were arrested in June of 1994 alone, most invaders have not been dislodged by the government, despite the irate urgings of local ranchers and landowners. Chiapas officials estimate that over 1,000 land invasions occurred during the 6 months following the uprising.³⁴

On March 7, more than 70 Mexican indigenous organizations sponsored a National Electoral Convention of Indigenous Peoples to probe the agendas of the major political parties 5 months prior to the national elections. All the registered political parties sent their presidential candidates except the PRI. Participants issued a declaration rejecting the government-EZLN proposed peace plan as not sufficiently far reaching. In particular, from their perspective, it failed to address adequately the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state embodied in the Mexican Constitution.³⁵ The Indigenous Convention demanded that 10 percent of legislative seats be reserved for representatives of indigenous organization, and that a sixth national electoral district be created, whereby indigenous candidates would be allowed to run without the sponsorship of political parties for reserved indigenous legislative seats, a provision adopted by Colombia in 1991. A further political proposal was for the redrawing of electoral districts in areas of heavy indigenous population such that the indigenous population would constitute a majority. Currently, in states such as Chiapas, districts have been designed for the express purpose of avoiding Indian majorities and fracturing the electoral support of individual ethnic groups.

On March 23, the attention focused on the Chiapas peace talks was abruptly eclipsed by the assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, and the new national electoral scenario created by the murder. On June 13, the EZLN announced that their constituency had rejected the government's peace proposal. Despite provisions for steeply increased economic assistance and political reform in Chiapas, the EZLN rejected the plan because it failed to address the national issues that were the core of their program—the reversal of the neoliberal economic policies of the Salinas government and its replacement by a government of transition. In the following weeks, indigenous and *campesino* organizations took advantage of the diverted national attention and the presence of human rights observers to lead a wave of land invasions of *haciendas* throughout the state. In retaliation, ranchers and landowners sponsored a wave of assassinations of *campesino* and Indian leaders.

Immediately prior to the Zapatista-sponsored National Democratic Convention (NDC), held in the zone of conflict on 8-10 August 1994, the fragile CEIOC coalition finally split in half, when those organizations receiving funding from the government opposed participation in the convention. The remaining half, calling itself the Independent CEOIC, “maintains a line of civilian support for the Zapatista proposals and negotiations, and continues to contribute significantly to the extension of ‘civilian bridges’ into the conflict zone.”³⁶ Independent indigenous leaders participating in the NDC complained that the majority of the participants were non-indigenous, and that only a few paragraphs of the Convention's final declaration referred to the demands of indigenous peoples. Moreover, the Zapatistas changed the term “indigenous peoples” to “ethnic minorities”—a term universally rejected by indigenous organizations throughout the Americas as degrading and restrictive of their rights in international law.³⁷

Following the August elections, the Zapatistas demands focused on preventing the inauguration of the winner of the Chiapas governor's race, the PRI's candidate Eduardo Robledo, and his replacement with PRD candidate Amado Avendaño, an early supporter of the Zapatistas, whom they claim was cheated of victory.³⁸ While the EZLN had hoped to regain national and international attention following the elections, on September 28 the head of the PRI was assassinated, inaugurating a season of political

scandal that has yet to subside. Frustrated, the Zapatistas broke off peace talks on October 10 and closed access to EZLN-held territory in eastern Chiapas. The following week, Subcomandante Marcos warned that the inauguration of Eduardo Robledo in December would lead to civil war.

On October 12, 1994 (not coincidentally, Columbus Day), a coalition of indigenous organizations issued a declaration establishing Indigenous Autonomous Regions throughout the state, which are intended to serve as a level of government between the municipal governments, indigenous communities and the state government.³⁹ The indigenous organizations, in a document entitled "Autonomy as a New Relationship Between the Indigenous Peoples and the National Society," articulated a series of constitutional reforms that would create autonomous indigenous regions in all parts of the country where indigenous peoples are present, with broad local powers to govern political, administrative, and cultural matters. Leaders of the Autonomous Indigenous Regions demanded "full respect and recognition of our irrefutable right to self-determination of our peoples and with that the recognition of our legitimate right to autonomy." By late October, four autonomous regions had been established, including 58 municipalities covering more than half the state's territory.⁴⁰

The creation of the Autonomous Indigenous Regions is perhaps the most profound expression of the nationalistic aspirations of indigenous peoples in Mexico, aspirations which had been expressed in the numerous marches, manifestos, and legislative proposals sponsored by Indian organizations prior to the uprising. In keeping with the tactics of indigenous organizations in other countries of the region, FIPI president Margarito Ruíz deflected criticism of the regional autonomous governments by citing Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution (on the rights and identity of indigenous peoples), as well as the International Labor Organization's Convention No. 169 (1989) on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries,⁴¹ and the U.N. Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. By contrast, in launching their rebellion the previous January, the EZLN cited Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution (which bases the sovereignty of the government in the Mexican people), and the Geneva Convention's protections of the rights of belligerents in wars of liberation. Thus, while the Indian organizations justify their

actions in terms of the rights of indigenous peoples in Mexican and international law, the EZLN bases its legitimacy on the rights of revolutionaries.

THE SPLIT

The public sympathy the indigenous combatants have gained and the solidarity of indigenous activists in other countries where their demands resonate strongly have provided the EZLN more leverage than their military or rhetorical strength alone could command. The Zapatistas have manipulated public sympathy for the Maya to maintain public support for a nonviolent solution to the conflict, and they have used the legacy of violence and terror against the Maya to manipulate the fears and loyalties of the Indian population. Particularly since the February 9 Mexican army offensive that pushed the EZLN deep into the jungle, the guerrillas have spread rumours of a genocidal war against the Mayan people and vilified the Mexican Government with exaggerations and fabrications of violence on the part of the military against noncombatants.⁴² Similarly, the Mexican government has cut off independent media and NGO access to the zone of conflict and is manipulating the information available to the official media. The government's outpouring of funds for public works programs in Chiapas since the uprising has divided the population between hardliners who want to reject the money until major national reforms are made (the position taken by the EZLN) and those desperate for the services the additional resources provide.⁴³ Suspicious of both the government and the Zapatistas, the authorities of the Indigenous Autonomous Regions and their allies in the National Electoral Convention of Indigenous Peoples work to elaborate their own constitutional reform proposals with regard to indigenous rights and to generate grassroots support in indigenous municipalities for independent indigenous candidates in local elections.⁴⁴ A series of national conferences on constitutional reform in April, May and August of 1995, was attended by over 400 indigenous organizations from throughout Mexico and resulted in the crystallization of a far-reaching constitutional reform program that may enable the Indian leaders to regain the agenda-setting prerogative the EZLN seemed to usurp in 1994.

Under the guidelines established by legislation passed by the Zedillo administration and the Mexican congress in March of 1995, a new series of peace talks were held in late April in mid-May, on June 8-11, and in early July.⁴⁵ At a press conference during the June meetings, a taped message was played in which Subcomandante Marcos asked for a consultation with the Zapatistas' supporters on the direction that the stalled rebellion should take. The Zapatista leader called on center and left forces throughout Mexico to form a broad social force in support of democratic reform and to consult among themselves and provide answers to the following five questions:

- Do you agree that the principal demands of the Mexican people are: land, housing, jobs, food, health, education, culture,⁴⁶ information, independence, democracy, liberty, justice and peace?
- Should the EZLN unite with others in a national front of opposition on behalf of these 13 demands?
- Should there be profound political transformation in terms that guarantee: equity, citizen participation, including non-party and non-governmental participation, respect for the vote, a reliable voting list and recognition of all the local regional and national political forces?
- Should the EZLN convert into a new and independent political force?
- Should the EZLN join with other forces and organizations to form a new political organization?⁴⁷

In this call for direction, one senses a division among those Zapatistas willing to hold out indefinitely for revolutionary change, those wishing to end the armed phase of the rebellion and unite with the left in a political movement, and those wishing to respond to the hunger and sickness reported to be decimating the EZLN cadres and their supporters by making a deal quickly. A clandestine revolutionary organization founded to confront and overthrow the national government directly, the EZLN seems unable to place on the table specific programmatic objectives rather than vague ideals.

The Zapatistas also seem to be losing the coherence of their base in eastern Chiapas, which had lent them credibility and unity in the beginning of the armed uprising. This is indicated by their broad appeals to all the democratic forces in Mexico, including workers, Indians, peasants, students, women, and artists, and to

their sympathizers in Europe and the Americas, as well as by their rallying cry: "Everything for Everyone!" The rebels are clearly more interested in mobilizing a national political movement than in resolving the severe social deficit in Chiapas that had made the uprising possible. Scores of poor indigenous families who have suffered the loss of a family member, property, or meager possessions because of the uprising now focus their anger and frustration on the EZLN.

The marriage of convenience that linked the fate of the indigenous movement to that of the rebels has benefitted both parties, however. The incorporation of the Maya of Chiapas—arguably the most disadvantaged and abused people in Mexico—into its ranks gave the EZLN credibility in the eyes of Mexicans and the international community. The indigenous organizations gained from the uprising a level of attention to their demands and their problems that they had been struggling to achieve for many years. They have so sensitized the public to these demands that the government has poured billions of pesos into Chiapas for public works and economic development, put forward proposals to distribute thousands of hectares of land, and has offered to recognize rights to community autonomy and respect for indigenous culture and traditions. Even their most challenging demands—for the right to participate in elections as indigenous organizations rather than political parties, and for constitutional changes acknowledging community autonomy—appear within reach.

By mid-1995 it seemed that the time had come for these two partners to seek a divorce. The Zapatistas lacked—because of their own intransigence, the intrusion of more important national issues, and the Zedillo administration's skillful handling of the conflict—the inclination and the capacity to use what little leverage they have in the interests of Mexico's Indians. They have rejected plans to acknowledge indigenous rights, address the severe deficiency of social services, assist indigenous farmers, and reopen the issue of agrarian reform. The only benefit the EZLN now provides the indigenous organizations is a modicum of attention to the egregious human rights situation in Chiapas—which has not improved since the uprising—and some restraint on the part of local security forces who do not want to incur the condemnation of human rights groups for their excessive use of force. Nevertheless, it is private actors who have perpetrated most of the violence since

the uprising, and the presence of the army and international observers has done little to stop them.

CONCLUSION

The marriage of convenience between the indigenous movement and the Zapatistas has enabled them to pursue mutual benefits in a volatile political region, with neither side fully embracing the other, since the two parties are fundamentally incompatible. The EZLN was created to confront the state with a revolutionary project based on European and Maoist ideas, using the tools, organizational forms, and rhetoric of Latin American-style guerrilla warfare. Added to this mix was a blend of the social customs of the indigenous peoples of the area—in particular, the consensual model of decision-making and the necessity of the Zapatista's nonindigenous leadership to gain the trust of indigenous communities based on years of education and reciprocal service. Analyzing the EZLN strategy as Gramsci might, the intellectual leaders of the movement took a common class position, combined it with revolutionary dogma, and inculcated a self-aware communal consciousness in a cohesive band of several thousand young cadres in the Lacandón. They then set out to “universalize” the counter-hegemonic project of this class as the interest of the Mexican population. They failed. First, rather than engaging the state's organs of force in a “war of position,” they tried to directly confront it with insufficient power. Second, they failed to convert their idealistic vision into a practical program that would appeal to a broad sector of the population.⁴⁸

The Zapatistas were able for a short period to manipulate the nationalism and paranoia endemic to persecuted minorities; to cast their socialist revolution in terms of a last-ditch effort of the Maya peoples to halt their own extermination by a conspiracy of Mexican and international neoliberal elites. As Joseph Rothschild explains, these tactics have been used throughout the world by political entrepreneurs, who stereotype competing ethnic group(s) into starkly polarized images of virtue and menace, images that telescope past conflicts and misproject their oversimplified recollection into the present context such as to exacerbate it. . . . Stereotyping thus interacts in a vicious cycle with the above-mentioned frequent anxiety of ethnic groups that their differences with competing groups are not really over the discrete questions

that are seemingly on the agenda but actually over hidden ultimates, indeed over their own survival.⁴⁹

Indigenous communities in Latin America have a long history of attempts by political entrepreneurs to capture the agenda and resources of existing indigenous organizations. Such attempts invariably fail, as indigenous communities have their own methods for testing the legitimacy and commitment of those who purport to lead them.

The indigenous movement, on the other hand, began with the strong ethnic and cultural identities of individual communities, and wove these historically rooted identities into a pan-indigenous self-awareness that resonates strongly with diverse indigenous communities at varying levels of acculturation. The renewal and amalgamation of multiple ethnic identities was provoked by the assault on the indigenous rural economy and land tenure rights and the rapid modernization and internationalization of Mexican culture in the 1970s and 1980s. As Anthony Giddens explains, the inherent nationalism of indigenous peoples was intensified by a reaction to modern society, which generates a desire for "an identity securely anchored in the past. . . . The disintegrative impact which is wrought upon pre-existing traditional cultures by modern economic and political development creates a search for renewed forms of group symbolism, of which nationalism is the most potent. Nationalism engenders a spirit of solidarity and collective commitment which is energetically mobilizing in circumstances of cultural decay."⁵⁰ While the indigenous movement is divided along regional, strategic, and programmatic lines, it is capable of unity when it comes to important matters of state policy. This unity is based on a *national* identity grounded in beliefs about the common descent, common struggles, and shared destiny of Mexico's indigenous peoples, which transcends the sharp ethnic, community, economic, and regional conflicts that characterize ancient and modern inter-ethnic relations. The indigenous conception of democracy, justice, collective rights, and the paramount importance of land and community has developed over hundreds of years and sustained the distinctiveness of indigenous culture against an onslaught of enforced assimilation, repression, and degradation.

In early 1996, it seems as if the indigenous movement has become the dominant partner in the marriage. Peace negotiations between the Mexican government and the EZLN drag on in

southern Mexico like a once-popular television series that is now kept on the air by a small but devoted following. Meanwhile, the mainstream indigenous movement seems to have gained a second wind behind the movement for regional autonomy--a consistent, and broad-based demand of Indians throughout Mexico.⁵¹ As discussed above, the autonomy movement was spearheaded by FIPI through its establishment of Autonomous Plurethnic Regions in Chiapas in late 1994. Since the establishment of a National Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA) on April 10, 1995, four national conventions have been held on the topic of ethno-territorial autonomy, convening hundreds of indigenous delegates. The fifth assembly, held on 4-8 January, 1996, in San Cristobal de las Casas, was co-sponsored by the EZLN in conjunction with ANIPA. The agenda for that meeting consisted solely of topics addressing the specific demands of indigenous peoples, such as "Indigenous Peoples Rights for Autonomy," "Guarantees of Justice towards Indigenous Peoples," and "The Promotion and Development of Indigenous Cultures and Traditions."⁵²

Thus, while the EZLN has had trouble mobilizing a broad-based political movement behind promises of "everything for everyone," Mexican indigenous organizations are converging behind a movement focusing on a specific demand that defines the indigenous movement in the Western Hemisphere—a reconceptualization and reorganization of relations between Indian nations and communities and non-Indian governments that constructs a sphere of cultural autonomy and territorial jurisdiction free of state interference. While the EZLN's brand of popular socialism and vague sloganeering has been eclipsed by irreversible international economic integration and democratic forces beyond its control, the indigenous movement is connecting to a world-wide impulse to reexamine the ideal of the nation-state and to reinterpret the concept of national sovereignty in accordance with an emerging ideal of cultural pluralism and the reality of many nations co-existing within state boundaries.

The marriage of convenience between the EZLN and the Mexican indigenous movement is thus a marriage of Mexico's revolutionary past and revolutionary future.

NOTES

1. On the impact of structural adjustment on Chiapas, see George A. Collier, "Structural Adjustment and New Regional Movements: The Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas," paper presented at "Ethnic Conflict and Governance in Comparative Perspective," Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, 15 Nov. 1994. On democratization as cause and resultant of the uprising, see Jonathan Fox, "The Challenge of Democracy: Rebellion as Catalyst," *Akwe:kon Journal* (Summer 1994): 13-19; and Stephen J. Wager and Donald E. Schulz, *The Awakening: The Zapatista Revolt and its Implications for Civil-Military Relations and the Future of Mexico*, Washington: Strategic Studies Institute, 1994). For an early analysis by the Mexican government's Secretary of Agrarian Reform, anthropologist Arturo Warman, see "Chiapas Today," 12 January 1994, distributed by the Mexican Embassy in Washington.

2. José Alcina Franch, comp., *Indianismo e indigenismo en América* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1990), 15.

3. On the movements of the 1970s, see Francoise Morin, ed., *Indianidad, etnocidio, indigenismo en América Latina* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano y Centre d'Etudes Mexicaines et Centramericaines, 1988); Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer, eds., *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America* (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1991; and Donna Lee Van Cott, ed., *Indigenous Peoples and Democratization in Latin America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

4. Alexis Panagides, "Mexico," in George Psacharopoulos and Harry Anthony Patrinos, eds., *Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America* (Washington: World Bank, 1994), 162; *Los Indios de México. Los Más pobres entre los pobres: Las Cifras de la discriminación y la miseria* (Mexico City: Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios/Comité de Apoyo y Defensa a Los Derechos Indios, N.D.), 4, 7-8.

5. The Maya grouping is the largest (25.2 percent), followed by the Nahua (22.3 percent). While the 1990 Mexican census cites a number of 7.9 percent, the census defines indigenous persons as those speaking an indigenous language, which would exclude a sizable portion of the population. As the Independent Front of Indigenous Peoples (FIPI) points out, this figure suggests that the number of Indians grew only 1.9 percent between 1980 and 1990, a rate 11 times less than that of the population as a whole. FIPI estimates that the indigenous population is three times more than that cited by the census, more than 20 million Mexicans, or around 20 percent. According to the *Gaia Atlas of First Peoples*, the percentage of indigenous people in Mexico is 11 percent. FIPI-CADDIAC, "Los Indios de México", 1-4; Julian Burger, *The Gaia Atlas of First Peoples: A Future for the Indigenous World* (Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1990), 181-83. For a comprehensive list of the distribution of the country's ethnic groups by

state, see Julio C. Tresierra, "Mexico: Indigenous People and the State," in Van Cott, 188-189.

6. After the Mexican Revolution, the government distributed land to Indians and other peasants in the form of community plots called *ejidos*. While the land belonged to the community and could not be sold or mortgaged, each family farmed its own individual plot.

7. Collier, "Structural Adjustment," 4, 8-11.

8. Rosa Rojas, "Las comunidades indígenas se han vuelto apartidistas," *El País/La Jornada*, 19 August 1994, 13.

9. The most significant such mobilization in Mexico, in which 10,000 Indians participated, took place in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, on Columbus Day, 1992. Also in 1992, hundreds of Indians demanding agrarian reform participated in the Xi'Nich March (March of Ants) from the Maya ceremonial center of Palenque in Chiapas, 700 miles to Mexico City.

10. The revisions of Article 27 allow *ejido* communities to vote to dissolve the *ejido* and distribute the land to individual families. On the impact of the reform of Article 27 on Chiapas, see Collier, "Structural Adjustment," and Antonio García de León, "Los regresos de la historia: Chiapas y la reforma del artículo 27," *Ojarasca* 11 (agosto 1993): 20-27.

11. "Interview with Antonio Hernandez Cruz, Maya Tojolabal and Secretary General of the CIOAC," *Abya Yala News* 8, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 14.

12. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, ed., "Aculturación e indigenismo," in *Indianismo e indigenismo en América*, comp. José Alcina Franch (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1990), 194-205.

13. Luis Hernández Navarro, "La nueva guerra maya," *Enfoque*, 9 January 1994, 14-17; Wager and Schultz, 2-3.

14. On the development of independent political organizations in Chiapas in the 1970s, see Juan González Esponda, "Caracterización del movimiento campesino en Chiapas: 1974-1989," *Cuadernos Agrarios* 3, Nueva Epoca (September-December, 1991): 96-107; and Luis Hernández Navarro, "La nueva guerra maya," *Enfoque*, 9 January 1994, 14-17.

15. Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor, "Chiapas: Maya Identity and the Zapatista Uprising," *Abya Yala News* 8, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 11.

16. The first, the Central of Independent Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (CIOAC), established in 1977, is a national peasant organization affiliated with the Communist Party that chiefly works to organize farm laborers. The second, National Coordination Plan de Ayala (CNPA) was founded in 1979 to work on agrarian issues. The Chiapan expression of the CNPA is the Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organization (OCEZ), which was founded in the Tzotzil community of Venustiano

Carranza in 1982. In 1988 the leader of CIOAC in Simojovel was assassinated, while the following year the leader of OCEZ was murdered. Radical political organizations include Proletarian Line, People United, and the Socialist Workers Party (Wager and Schulz, 2-5).

17. On the economic crisis in Chiapas after 1989, see "La resistencia cafetelera en Chiapas," *Campouno*, 23 de marzo de 1992, 4-5; and Navarro, 14-17.

18. Collier, "Structural Adjustment," 11. On how the PRI stole the elections see Jonathan Fox, "The Roots of Chiapas," *Boston Review*, April/May 1994, 25.

19. George A. Collier, "The New Politics of Exclusion: Antecedents to the Rebellion in Mexico," *Dialectical Anthropology* (Spring, 1994): 13.

20. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

21. *Ibid.*, 5.

22. From interviews with masked EZLN leaders in "No nos dejaron otro camino," *La Jornada* (19 January 1994); Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor, "Chiapas: Maya Identity and the Zapatista Uprising," *Abya Yala News* 8, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 6.

23. See on this point "Preliminary Peace Accord Reached in Chiapas, Mexico," *Indian Law Resource Center Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 1-4.

24. Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, *El Despertador Mexicano* (1 December 1993), 6.

25. Eugenio Bermejillo, "Indianismo indio," *La Jornada del Campo*, trans. Van Cott, 25 January 1994, 9.

26. Oscar Camacho Guzmán, "'Declaración de Guerra' del Ejército Zapatista en Chiapas," *El País/La Jornada*, 2 January 1994, 8; Warman, 16.

27. David Clark Scott, "Mexican Rebels Reject Talks, Vow to Fight to Death for Socialism," *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 January 1994, 1,8.

28. Warman, 18; "Versión de propuesta del EZLN para que se inicie el diálogo," *El País/La Jornada*, 11 January 1994, 10.

29. Tim Golden, "Mexican Rebel Leader Seeks no Quick Settlement," *New York Times*, 20 February 1994, A1.

30. Although violence against and illegal incarceration of Indians has always been high in rural Mexico, human rights groups documented an increase in Chiapas in 1993. See in particular a report by the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, *Civilians at Risk: Military and Police Abuses in the Mexican Countryside* (August 1993), which contains a section on Chiapas (10-22).

31. Religious conflict dates back to the late 1960s, when Protestant and evangelical groups began to gain a foothold in Chiapas. The ferocity of the expulsions of Protestant indigenous converts from their ancestral

communities was based on the threat Protestantism posed to the authority of traditional indigenous and non-indigenous local power structures. Converts refused to pay taxes for ritual fiestas, to participate in religious public life, or to drink alcohol, which threatened the economic security of the religious office holders, who monopolized the sale of alcohol. On the expulsions of Protestant families in Chiapas, see María Magdalena Gómez Rivera, "El caso de los expulsados indígenas, por supuestos motivos religiosos (Chiapas, México)," Trabajo presentado en el Concurso Pluralismo Jurídico y Derecho Indígena, organizado por ILSA en 1993; and Collier, "The New Politics of Exclusion," 28.

32. David Clark Scott, "Chiapas Rebellion Sparks Indian Dissent Across Mexico," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 February 1994.

33. "Interview with Antonio Hernandez Cruz, Maya Tojolabal and Secretary General of the CIOAC," *Abya Yala News* 8, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 12.

34. Tracy Eaton, "Land grabs accelerate in Chiapas. Militant Chiapas peasants snatching land, kidnapping ranchers, at an increasing rate," *Miami Herald International Edition*, 5 July 1994, A1, A5.

35. "Interview," 12.

36. Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor, "Elections in Mexico: Indigenous Suffrage Under Protest," *Abya Yala News* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 8.

37. Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios (FIPI), *El FIPI en la convención Democrática Nacional* (Mexico City: FIPI, August 1994); Rosa Rosas, "Las comunidades indígenas se han vuelto apartidistas," *El País/La Jornada* August 19, 1994, 13; Rosa Rojas, "Mayor reconocimiento a derechos indios, demandarán en la CND," *El País/La Jornada*, August 7, 1994, 18.

38. While Avendaño won an unprecedented 30 percent of the vote, and thousands of displaced Chiapas voters were unable to vote due to a lack of absentee ballots, most impartial observers believe Robledo was the winner.

39. Also in October, the independent faction of CEOIC announced the creation of "transitional governments" as part of a state-wide civil resistance movement against PRI-installed municipal leaders and in support of PRD gubernatorial candidate Amado Avendaño. Since the August 1994 elections, indigenous and opposition political activists have seized municipal offices from their PRI occupants in 40 percent of the municipal governments of the state. These actions were not directed by the EZLN nor carried out by its forces; however, the seizure of lands and municipal offices occurred in the vacuum of state authority created by a Zapatista offensive beginning in mid-November 1994, which expanded the area of control of the guerrillas, and by the caution demanded of the army by the international community and sectors of Mexican public opinion. A cease

fire commenced on January 1, 1995. Personal communication with Jonathan Fox, 16 June 1995; Elio Henríquez y José Gil Olmos, "Bloquea el CEOIC varias carreteras en Chiapas," *El País/La Jornada*, 28 de octubre de 1994.

40. Press release, "Detengan la guerra. No al Exterminio de los Mayas de Chiapas!" trans. Van Cott. Consejo Ejecutivo del Concejo General de las Regiones Autónomas, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, 13 Feb. 1995 (incorrectly written as 1994). José Gil Olmos y Elio Henríquez, "Se formarán grupos parlamentarios regionales: Se extiende a 58 municipios de Chiapas el proyecto de autonomía," *El País/La Jornada*, 28 October 1994, 19.

41. Mexico is one of five Latin American countries to have signed ILO 169, which protects the rights of indigenous peoples to govern themselves according to their customs and traditions. The other signatories are Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Paraguay.

42. Mark Fineman, "Military Can't Outflank Rebels in War of Words," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 February 1995.

43. In 1994, \$220 million, 44 percent more than had been budgeted, was poured into Chiapas' social development and infrastructure funds. The state had already been the top recipient of federal aid. Wager and Schulz, 23.

44. "Detengan la Guerra. No al Exterminio de los Mayas de Chiapas!"; Personal communication from Araceli Burguete, FIPI, 15 February 1994. See the comprehensive proposal elaborated by FIPI and the Comité de Apoyo y Defensa a Los Derechos Indios (CADDIAC), *Pueblos Indios: Hacia una nueva constitución y un nuevo estado: Seis principios y seis propuestas* (Mexico City: FIPI/CADDIAC, 1994).

45. Boletín de Prensa No. 155, "La Solución definitiva al conflicto en Chiapas debe darse por la vía del respeto a la ley: Zedillo," Presidencia de la República, 14 de feb. de 1995.

46. Note that this list of ideals is identical to that in the original EZLN manifesto "El Despertador Mexicano," except that culture, the *sine qua non* of the Indian movement, and information have been added.

47. "Convoca el Ejército Zapatista a la sociedad civil a realizar una "gran consulta nacional," Internet transmission from the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, 9 June 1995, taken from *La Jornada*, 8 June 1995.

48. Antonio Gramsci, ed., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971/1992).

49. Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnicity: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 63.

50. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 215.

51. Héctor Díaz Polanco, "La rebelión de los más pequeños: Los Zapatistas y la Autonomía," paper presented at the XIX International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, 28-30 September 1995, Washington, DC.

52. San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico: Asamblea Nacional Indígena Para la Autonomía (ANIPA), "Extraordinary and Urgent Meeting in Mexico," San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico, Internet transmission, 28 December 1995.

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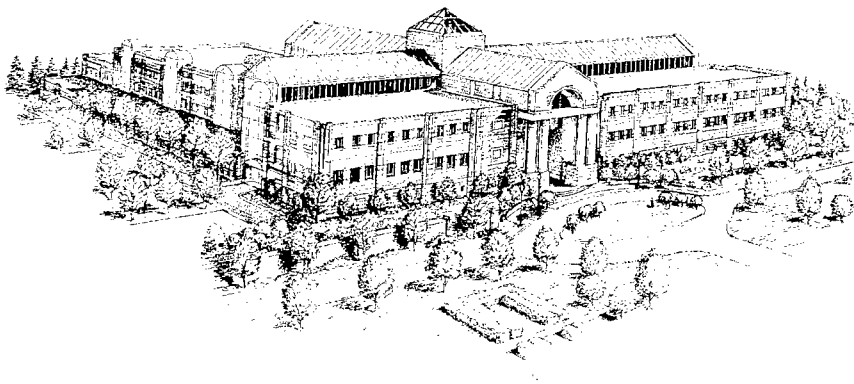
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